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TALES FROM SANSKRIT DRAMATISTS

THE FAMOUS PLAYS OF

BHASA, SUDRAKA, KALIDASA, SRI HARSHA, BHAVABHUTI AND VISAKHADATTA.

BY

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FOREWORD.

IT is a healthy sign of the times that alongside of the political ferment that is stirring the country there is also a healthy literary renaissance with a desire to know more about our glorious Sanskrit literature and to use that knowledge for the purpose of enriching our Vernaculars in the various forms of literary compositions chiefly dramatic, that are still undeveloped. To those that are acquainted with Sanskrit there are the original works, but Sanskrit scholars are unfortunately not many. The great majority have to resort to translations and abridgements either in English or the Vernaculars. It was a happy idea of Mr. Natesan to publish the present book "TALES FROM SANSKRIT DRAMATISTS" which present in readable form the story of some well-known dramas.

Of the lives of these authors little is known and it is a fruitless task to attempt to construct their lives out of the meagre and often conflicting data. They were content to leave posterity to guage them by their works and many of us may leave it

at that. What mattered the sordid anxieties and details of their daily life when they trusted to time to preserve the glory of their work? The hand of time has, while preserving some of their glorious compositions in the various spheres of literary art, consigned to oblivion several works of great literary merit, and as early as the eighth century Bhattanarayana at the close of his *Venisamhara* deplored the absence of royal patrons and learned critics. The Mahomedan invasions completed the literary decadence and centuries of blood and tears left little room for the exercise of literary fancy. Let us hope that as in the period of the Great Gupta Empire there will be a second revival and that enriched with knowledge of Western literature the new dawn will be resplendent with added lustre, and not merely the reflex of the setting sun which for a brief period tinges the eastern sky.

From Bhasa's *Swapnavasavadatta* to Visakhadatta's *Mudrarakshasa* there is a gulf of some centuries and in the interval technical rules of art imposed restraints which while restricting the scope of dramatic fancy added little to the beauty of diction. The selection of the dramas which typify the various periods in the history of the Sanskrit drama is no easy task, and Mr. Natesan

must be congratulated on the judicious selection he has made. Bhasa's *Swapnavasavadatta*, Sudraka's *Mricchakatika*, Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*, *Malavikagnimitra* and *Vikramorvasiya*, Bhavabhuti's *Malati-Madhava*, Sri Harsha's *Nagananda* and *Ratnavali* are dramas of which any literature may be proud and show the wide range of dramatic art and fancy of the Sanskrit Drama.

Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* is a happy model to choose for a book like the present and the plot of the drama selected is closely followed and the rich fancy of the original is brought out well. There are several other Sanskrit dramas that will afford scope for two or three volumes of a similar natnre and we hope the book will be the first of a series.

C. V. KUMARASWAMI SASTRI.

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BHASA

BHASA was one of the earliest dramatists of India, but it is not known when exactly he flourished. All that is certain is that he lived long before Kalidasa, for that poet refers to him as a " far-famed " predecessor of his in the art of dramatic composition, and speaks of his works as " ancient." Though once renowned, Bhasa had been all but forgotten till a few years ago when more than a dozen anonymous plays were published at Trivandrum and identified by their Editor as the productions of this old dramatist. Some scholars have doubted the authenticity of these Plays. But it is now generally accepted that these works belong to a very early period in the history of Sanskrit Drama, and there is sufficient evidence to connect them with Bhasa. The language, form and technique of these plays point to a date much earlier than the Christian era, to a time when Sanskrit

was probably the spoken language. That is the possible explanation of many simple and colloquial expressions, which are not so frequently employed by later classical writers. The actual date of Bhasa is a much debated question. By reason of the references to Buddhism, he could not be placed before 5th century B. C. From the fact that a verse appearing in Bhasa's *Pratigna-Yaugandha-rayana* is quoted in Kautilya's *Artha-sastra* and from considerations of style and grammar etc., it is inferred that he lived before the time of Chanakya. Accordingly, the view is generally held that he lived about the 4th century B. C., though one view would place him in 200 B. C.

Some thirteen works of Bhasa have so far been discovered and published in the Trivandrum series by the late Mahamahopadhyaya Ganapati Sastrigal, from which we select for this collection the two plays, viz., (1.) Svapna-Vasavadatta and (2.) Avimaraka. The *Svapna-Vasavadatta* has all along been recognised as the best of Bhasa's plays. Thus a writer of the 9th century

A. D. says that when the whole cycle of Bhasa's plays was thrown into the fire, the *Svapna-Vasavadatta* alone remained unconsumed by the flames—a statement which in all likelihood, signifies that the severest criticism could do no harm to it. Its chief excellences are the simplicity and directness of its style and the beauty and nobility of the life it depicts. The plot is drawn from the legendary lore of Ancient India and relates to the life and doings of the half mythical and half-historical hero, Udayana, who is said to have reigned over the province of Vatsa with its capital at Kausambi, somewhere near modern Allahabad. The adventures of Udayana have furnished the theme for many a Sanskrit work, and the place which they have gained in Indian literature is next in importance only to that of the achievements of the heroes of the two great Epics—the Ramayana and the Maha-Bharata. Bhasa himself has dramatised the earlier portion of Udayana's life in his *Pratigna-Yaugandharayana* which is included in the Trivandrum collection.

Avimaraka is one of the two extant plays of Bhasa which have an original plot, the other being his *Charudatta*, which, in an amplified form, has come down to us as the *Mricchakatika* of the poet Sudraka. Instead of going in for legendary or mythological stories, Bhasa invented his plot in both these cases and, in consequence, these plays must possess a peculiar interest to all, as throwing light on the social, political, moral and intellectual conditions of his time. As a social drama, *Charudatta* will easily hold its own against any drama, ancient or modern. The plot of *Avimaraka* is, however, one of romance and love, and the actions of the hero, who is endowed with rare physical strength and courage, have a peculiar fascination for the reader. There is a departure from the commonplace conceptions of love and romance, and the story presents many new features.

VISION OF VASAVADATTA

PRINCIPAL DRAMATIS PERSONAE

UDAYANA—King of Vatsa.
VASAVADATTA—Queen.
PADMAVATI—Princess of Magadha.
YAUGANDHARAYANA—Prime Minister.
RUMANVAN—Commander-in-Chief.
The Clown.
The Chamberlain.
A religious student.
Padmavati's Nurse.

VISION OF VASAVADATTA

ONCE upon a time, there ruled in Kausambi, the capital of the Vatsa country, a royal family of great prowess descended from Arjuna of Mahabharata fame. The most renowned prince of that line was Udayana who was not inferior in valour or magnanimity of soul to Arjuna himself. This prince was highly accomplished and was particularly famous for his skill in music and in elephant-hunting. It was his addiction to the latter that led him into captivity while yet he was very young. But we are not now concerned with this misadventure of his. It is sufficient to remember that at Ujjain, whereto he was taken as captive, he was required to teach playing on the *vina* to Vasavadatta, the beloved daughter of his captor Mahasena, the Valiant. Udayana, charmed by the beauty of the princess, fell in love with her, and she also was smitten with a like passion for him. Escaping from the captivity soon, he returned with his

pupil, the princess, to his capital Kausambi where he married her. The match was not unwelcome to Mahasena at all. In fact his motive in capturing Udayana and employing him later as music-master to his daughter was that a natural affection might grow between them. But the prince had been too impatient in running away with Vasavadatta. Prevented thus from witnessing in the flesh their daughter united in happy wedlock to the youth of their choice, Mahasena and his queen celebrated the marriage with the portraits of the bride and the bridegroom, thereby deriving what little satisfaction they could. Udayana resumed sovereignty over his kingdom with Vasavadatta as his queen and, for some time, the couple lived happily together. There was also peace and plenty in the land. But adversity again overtook him, for the larger part of his kingdom was subjugated by his enemy Aruni.

There was at that time another great kingdom more to the East—Magadha—with its capital at Rajagriha. Its king had lately died leaving the kingdom to his son, Darsaka.

Darsaka had a sister named Padmavati who was of uncommon beauty and who, if what soothsayers had predicted was true, would one day become the queen of Udayana. Udayana had, as his chief minister, one Yaugandharayana by name who was known as much for his loyalty to his sovereign as for his cleverness in policies of state. When the minister whose whole intent now was to see supremacy restored to Udayana, came to know of the prediction about Padmavati, he made up his mind to secure her hand for his king; for, should she marry him, it would be easy to get back the lost kingdom with the aid of the king of Magadha. Any royal house in the country would have welcomed matrimonial alliance with the Prince of Kausambi. But there was one insuperable difficulty. Udayana had already married Vasavadatta for whom he bore intense love, and nobody durst propose to him to take another to his wife. Yaugandharayana, however, would not be daunted by anything; and he devised a plan to achieve his purpose taking into his confidence Vasavadatta as well as Rumanvan, the

commander-in-chief. What this plan was we shall presently see.

Udayana, after his defeat by Aruni, was staying with his queen at a place called Lavanaka on the eastern frontier of his kingdom. Yaugandharayana then arranged with the commander-in-chief that, on a day on which the king had gone a-hunting, the royal camp should be set fire to, and the false news circulated that Vasavadatta had been burnt to death along with Yaugandharayana who attempted to save her life. This was accordingly done after Yaugandharayana and Vasavadatta had left Lavanaka. Udayana returned when his camp was almost in ashes; and, learning that both his beloved wife and his trusted minister had perished in the flames, greatly bewailed his destiny. He was on the point of throwing himself into the fire which was still blazing here and there, but was saved by the entreaties of Rumanvan. He, however, refused to be consoled, and recalling some one or other of the countless associations of his departed queen, he fainted again and again but was each time with great difficulty revived.

After he was a little calmed, he was taken away from there with a view to turn his thoughts as far as possible from Vasavadatta.

Now Yaugandharayana, who had entrusted the burden of administration as well as the care of his master to his colleague, donned the garb of the ascetic, and set out eastwards towards Magadha with Vasavadatta, also in disguise, feigning that he was a pilgrim from Ujjain and representing the young lady accompanying him as his sister whom her husband had deserted. On their journey, they had to pass through dense and lonely forests and Vasavadatta was subjected to much fatigue and many vexations, neither of which she as princess or as queen had ever known. Yaugandharayana had to comfort her often by pointing out how the wheel of Fortune turns and, in turning, lowers even the good, and by reassuring her of coming prosperity. As they approached Rajagriha they saw, in the woods that skirted the capital, a great many people—rather an unusual sight in a place which bore on it all the signs of an abode of ascetic men and women.

The fact was that after the death of the old king, his widowed queen, Darsaka's mother, had retired from the world and was living in a hermitage there, practising penance. That was the day on which her daughter Padmavati, the princess of Rajagriha, had come to pay her respects to her mother and receive her blessings. Naturally all the royal paraphernalia had followed her which accounted for the presence of so large a crowd in a place which one would expect to be lonely and secluded. To mark her visit to the forest, the princess had ordered it to be proclaimed that she would confer on any person staying there whatsoever he might ask for. "O Ye ascetic-dwellers of the forest! Listen, Listen, revered sirs! Her Royal Highness, the princess of Magadha, returning your love by hers, offers you as presents whatever you may choose. Who needs vessels? Who, clothes? And who that has duly completed his religious study seeks to pay the preceptor's fee? The princess in her devotion to virtue begs this favour of you—to tell her what she should give. Whoever wants anything may ask for it.

To whom should she give? And what?" Yaugandharayana who had just arrived there with Vasavadatta, when he heard this proclamation, thought he should seize the opportunity. He went up straight to the royal officer and desired to know if the princess would graciously take under her protection his sister till he returned from the pilgrimage which he pretended he had undertaken. Vasavadatta was greatly perplexed when she saw the new turn events were taking; but she kept quiet as she fully confided in the wisdom and goodness of Yaugandharayana. Besides, her love for Udayana was so deep that she deemed no hardship was too great to bear for his sake. The prayer of Yaugandharayana was in one sense simple and it would be easy to grant it, especially for a princess like Padmavati. But in another sense it was must embarrassing to comply with, for it meant looking after a young and beautiful woman of good family in the absence of all her relations. "Your Royal Highness," said the Chief of her staff, "the request is a big one. How can we agree to grant it? Easy would it be

to give away money, life, penance: or, for that matter, anything whatsoever; but hard it is to be surety for such a charge." But the princess had given her word and would not retract it. "Sir," said she, "to proclaim first that whatsoever was wanted would be given and then to hesitate to give is not right. What he says, should be done." So Padmavati received Vasavadatta, whose very appearance showed that she was a high-born lady that had seen better days; and it so happened that at the first meeting itself, they two began to like each other. Vasavadatta, who had heard that Mahasena, her father, was desiring the princess for his daughter-in-law, felt towards Padmavati like an elder sister; and Padmavati in her nobility of heart began to love and respect Vasavadatta as her senior.

Just after Padmavati had plighted her word to Yaugandharayana for the care of Vasavadatta, a religious student from Lavanaka arrived there and he recounted how his study had been interrupted suddenly by a disastrous fire which, as he said, had not only killed the queen but, owing to the subsequent departure

from there of the king, had rendered the place quite desolate. The vivid account which he gave of the lamentations of Udayana for his lost queen made a deep impression upon Padmavati; and she admired the prince so much for his tenderness and passion that love for him might be said to have stolen into her maiden heart then. After bidding adieu to them, the student pursued his way and Yaugandharayana also proceeded on his journey, the secret aim of which was to carry through the rest of his scheme for re-installing his master on his ancestral throne. The two princesses also reached in due course the palace at Rajagriha. Though sore at heart owing to separation from her lord, Vasavadatta appeared outwardly happy in the company of Padmavati; and being very discreet, she gave not the slightest clue to her identity during all her long stay there,

To return to Udayana: the loss of his beloved queen had made life meaningless to him. Yet nobody could suggest to him the idea of marrying again. The very thought was unbearable to him. But time had its healing

influence; and once when he was on a political visit at Darsaka's court, the entreaties of the bride's people induced him at last to consent to his marriage with Padmavati. Vasavadatta, as we know, all along believed that her own brother, the prince of Ujjain, was suitor for Padmavati's hand, and the news that she was engaged to marry Udayana was only casually made known to her. It happened thus: Once when Padmavati was indulging in some merry sport as became her maidenhood, Vasavadatta said to her: "You will, I know, be the daughter-in-law of Mahasena's queen." Padmavati asked her: "Who is Mahasena?" and then the following conversation took place:—

VASAVADATTA.—There is one Pradyota, king of Ujjain who is called 'Mahasena' on account of his large and mighty army.

PADMAVATI'S NURSE.—The Princess does not like to wed his son.

VASAVADATTA.—Whom else does she like then?

NURSE.—There is Udayana, king of Vatsa. The Princess admires him much.

VASAVADATTA.—(*To herself*). So she wants to marry my lord. (*Aloud*) Why?

NURSE.—Because of his great tenderness of heart.

VASAVADATTA.—(*To herself*). I see, I see, even so was it with me.

NURSE.—Princess, suppose he is ugly?

VASAVADATTA.—No, no, he is quite handsome.

PADMAVATI.—Friend, how do you know it?

VASAVADATTA.—(*To herself*). My partiality for my lord has made me forget my resolve. What shall I do now? Yes, I see. (*Aloud*) Sister, thus the people of Ujjain say.

PADMAVATI.—That is likely. He is not a stranger to Ujjain; and beauty, as they say, is a joy for all.

Though this incident reassured Vasavadatta that her lord was alive and well, and was

so far a source of great relief, her feeling had another side which made her quite sad. Yet so strong of heart was she that she did not, even under such trying circumstances, reveal her identity.

The wedding was soon arranged to take place at Rajagriha and, when the bridal day arrived, Vasavadatta herself, as Fate would have it, had to string the wedding garland which, according to custom, had to be entrusted to auspicious hands. She was chosen in particular for it, because of her high rank and her friendship for the bride, not merely for her skill in such work. When the marriage was over, Udayana remained at Rajagriha for some time. Vasavadatta, who was sorely distressed at the course which events had taken, would gladly have put an end to her life; but the hope that she might catch a glimpse of her sweet lord kept her alive. Now Padmavati had reared a beautiful flower-plant in the royal garden and it blossomed unusually well that season. Desirous of showing it to Udayana, she invited him to visit the garden; and herself, accompanied by Vasavadatta,

went there early to await his arrival. When the two friends had seen and admired the wealth of flowers which the plant had borne, Vasavadatta asked, "Sister, How do you like your husband?" to which Padmavati replied: "Friend, I do not know what to say; but I cannot bear to be away from him". This made Vasavadatta introspective and she was saying to herself "Even Padmavati, who is but newly wedded to him feels thus! But I am yet alive!" when Padmavati interposed: "I have, however, one doubt," and added, "Was his Majesty as dear to Vasavadatta as he is to me?" Vasavadatta answered unawares—"Even more." Padmavati at once asked "How do you know?"

Vasavadatta realised her mistake but it was too late and so added: "If she had not loved him so much, she would not have stolen out of her father's house to follow him." At this stage, Padmavati's Nurse, who also was there, intervening, asked the princess, "Why do you not, on a fit occasion, ask your lord to teach you how to play on the *vina*?" Padmavati replied "I have

already done so." Vasavadatta then eagerly enquired "And what was his reply?" and Padmavati said "Without uttering a syllable, he fetched a deep sigh and kept quiet." It was certain from this that Udayana, recollecting the excellent qualities of Vasavadatta, was about to weep but restrained his tears out of regard for Padmavati's feelings. When Udayana arrived with the Vidushaka in the garden, Vasavadatta, as was the custom, retired into a bower near by, Padmavati also accompanying her; and from there the hapless lady looked upon her lord for the first time after her long separation. The conversation between him and his friend the Vidushaka made it clear to her how devoted to her memory the king was. All this, though consoling in one way, brought tears to her eyes, but under the pretext of not disturbing Padmavati from keeping company with Udayana, she returned to her apartment in the palace.

One day, after this incident, Padmavati became ill; and when the news reached Udayana, he felt very uneasy; for overmuch love always apprehends evil. He

went to see his queen along with the Vidushaka to the garden-house where Padmavati was reported to be. But he did not find her, though the bed prepared for her was there. Expecting her soon, Udayana remained there and the Vidushaka, in order to while away time, began to narrate a story. The story was about Ujjain which at once put Udayana in mind of Vasavadatta. Observing the effect which it had on the king, the Vidushaka changed the theme of his story. By that time Udayana fell asleep. The night was growing cold; and the Vidushaka departed to fetch a *shawl* leaving the king alone who began to talk of Vasavadatta in his dream. At that time, Vasavadatta who also had heard of her friend's indisposition which, because it meant anxiety to her lord, was doubly disconcerting to her, came to the garden-house to see her. When she came, she saw Udayana lying there on the couch; and, mistaking him for Padmavati, sat by his side. Just then Udayana said: "O Vasavadatta, why have you not had your toilet?" Vasavadatta then discovered that it was not Padma-

vati but Udayana. While she was afraid that she had probably been discovered, Udayana muttered something from which she concluded that he was but dreaming. She accordingly made bold to stay there for sometime longer in order to have the satisfaction of looking well upon her lord. Udayana went on speaking in his dream; and Vasavadatta taking up the conversation gave answers to his dream questions :—

UDAYANA.— Ah! Dear! Ah! Dear pupil! Why don't you speak to me?

VASAVADATTA.—Speak? Dear! I *am* speaking.

UDAYANA.— Are you angry with me?

VASAVADATTA.—No, no; sad rather.

UDAYANA.— If you are not angry, why are you not wearing your ornaments?

VASAVADATTA.—Could there be any ornament better than being honoured thus by your love?

UDAYANA.— Are you thinking of the separation?

VASAVADATTA.—(*Angrily*) Away! Talk of separation even now?

UDAYANA.— Then I shall appease you for having deserted you. (*Stretches forth both hands*).

Fearing that her stay there longer might upset Yaugandharayana's plans, she resolved to leave the room; but, before doing so, she lifted up Udayana's arm which was then hanging down and placed it on the couch. That act half awoke Udayana. Realising the situation, Vasavadatta, though loath to part, left immediately; and Udayana followed her half-dreaming, but coming against the door-way, suddenly stopped. That awoke him fully but it was only after Vasavadatta had made good her escape. Udayana saw a love-lorn form flit across, but was scarcely able to say whether what he had seen in that flash between waking and dream was actually Vasavadatta or only a *vision* of her. When after some time the Vidushaka returned, Udayana, who was still thrilling with emotion, told him that he had encountered Vasavadatta

alive; but, as might be expected, the Vidushaka laughed at him saying that it should have been either a dream or a delusion. To which Udayana replied :— " If it be a dream, it is happy not to wake from it; or if it be a delusion, let me throughout be so deluded ". The incident made his grief for the lost queen all the more poignant.

About this time Udayana had to leave Rajagriha as the arrangements for the expedition against Aruni were complete, thanks chiefly to the untiring exertions of Yaugandharayana. Placing himself at the head of the allied armies of Vatsa and Magadha, he marched against the enemy and easily vanquished him. One day, after his victorious return, while Udayana was in an upstair hall of the royal mansion at the capital, he heard sweet music played by a street mendicant; and he at once discovered that the notes were emanating from the *vina* which he had presented to his beloved Vasavadatta—so delicate was his perception of sound and so attached was he to Vasavadatta. We have referred above to Udayana's captivity at Ujjain which led to his

marriage with Vasavadatta. It was with the romantic circumstances of that marriage that the *Ghoshavati*—for that was the name of the *vina*—was associated, and it was the very same instrument on which some one was playing in the street. Udayana at once made enquiries of the mendicant who revealed where and how he had secured it and in what plight it was when he saw it. It had been thrown upon brambles in a forest and it bore on its body the droppings of the winged folk of the forest. Udayana took the *vina* which the minstrel willingly made over to him and it once again brought vividly before his mind the whole tragedy of Vasavadatta; but it also helped him to spend his days closer, as it seemed to him, to his beloved lost.

Now Vasavadatta's parents at Ujjain who had received the news of the restoration to Udayana of his lost kingdom, though sorrowing for the woeful loss of their daughter, sent envoys to congratulate him. They also sent, to serve as a sort of memento to him, the portraits of him-

self and Vasavadatta which they had used in the marriage they celebrated after his escape from Ujjain. The envoys were admitted into the presence of Udayana, when Padmavati also was with him. After the usual exchange of courtesies, the portraits were presented and when Padmavati was about to bow to the likeness of her departed sister, she at once observed the resemblance of the person portrayed there as Vasavadatta to the lady under her protection. When she mentioned this surprising resemblance to Udayana, he naturally grew anxious to see the lady but restrained himself when he learnt the circumstances in which she had come to be with Padmavati. Meanwhile Yaugandharayana also was there under the pretext of taking back his sister, and when the lady was sent for in response to his call, the identity of Vasavadatta was at once made known. Yaugandharayana also revealed himself and, though he was conscious that he had striven all along for nothing but what was good for the king, explained with a quivering heart the motive which had prompted him

to put this plan in operation. He implored the pardon of his sovereign for having separated his beloved queen from him for so long. The king thanked him after fully forgiving him and the party rejoiced very much indeed at the recovery of Vasavadatta which had so beautifully synchronised with the restoration to Udayana of full sovereignty over his kingdom. Vasavadatta's friendship for Padmavati was already old and firm; and so noble and generous was Padmavati herself that the knowledge that she had a rival in her did not in the least unsettle her mind. When it was suggested that the happy tidings should be communicated to the parents of Vasavadatta at Ujjain, Udayana said he would himself repair thereto with all; and so he did to the infinite joy of Mahasena and his queen.

AVIMARAKA

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

KUNTHIBHOJA—King of Vairanthya.
BHUTHIKA—Minister of Kunthibhoja.
SOWVIRARAJA *or* King of Sowvira.
AVIMARAKA *alias* VISHNUSENA—
Son of Sowviraraja.
THE KING OF BENARES.
JAYAVARMA—Son of the King of Benares.
NARADA
A SAGE
MEGHANADA—A Vidyadhara.
QUEEN OF KUNTHIBHOJA.
SUDARSANA—Queen of Benares.
SULOCHANA—Queen of Sowviraraja.
KURANGI—Daughter of Kunthibhoja.
SUMATHI—Younger daughter of Kunthibhoja.
SOUDAMINI—Wife of the Vidyadhara.
THE NURSE OF KURANGI.
NALINIKA—The nurse's daughter.
ATTENDANTS.

AVIMARAKA

IN the kingdom of Sowvira, there once lived a king, who had a son named Vishnusena, a very handsome and precocious youth who, even as a boy, displayed unique courage and heroism. While he was still in his adolescence, a blood-thirsty fiend made an irruption into his father's kingdom and began to spread death and terror everywhere. No one could be found to cope with the menace and end the wild orgy of blood. Every day, the woes of the people increased, and the king was in a fix, unable to devise any means of countering this menace. The young boy Vishnusena came to know of this, and one day, giving the slip to the Palace-sentry, secretly left for the demon's abode. The demon, mightily pleased at the voluntary advent of such an elegant morsel, commenced his nefarious operations against him. But Vishnusena, laughing a contemptuous laugh, wrestled with the demon (who had taken the form of a goat), threw him

down and slew him with ease. Hence he became known as Avimaraka or Goat-slayer.'

Some years later, while Sowviraraja was out hunting in his forests, he chanced to come upon a sage who was crying over the corpse of his disciple, who had been mauled and slain by a tiger. At the sight of the king, the grief of the sage became transformed into indignation at the inability of the king to protect his subjects from the molestations of wild animals, and he began to abuse him in strong language, without mentioning the cause of his outburst. Ignorant of the cause of the disciple's death and innocent of having given any offence to the sage, the king tried unsuccessfully to get in a word with him. But, when the sage continued his imprecations without intermission and without heeding his expostulations, the king lost his temper and retorted that a person who was capable of such unreasoning anger was not worthy to be a sage, and that, in the guise of a Brahman sage, he was in reality a panchama. Stung to the quick by the reproach, the sage cursed him that he should become a

panchama with his wife and son. The king immediately became contrite and entreated the sage to recall his words. For a long time, the sage remained adamant, but finally he relented so far as to absolve him from the effects of his curse, after he had lived in disguise for one year. The sage then restored his disciple to life and departed with him for another kingdom immediately. The king promptly returned to his palace, handed over the reins of Government to his ministers, and, without informing any one of his movements or destination, left the kingdom with his wife and son, and took his residence in the city of Vairanthya, where his sister's husband, Kunthibhoja, was ruler, intending to spend the year of curse there in concealment.

King Kunthibhoja had a beautiful daughter named Kurangi, who, at the time when Sowviraraja settled down in Vairanthya, had attained an age when her matrimony had become a matter of serious consideration and some anxiety to her parents. Kunthibhoja had no troubles of any kind in his kingdom and yet he had no peace of mind ; for "a girl's

father has many things to exercise his mind." He was unable to come to a quick decision about it. There were ever so many matters to be considered before the irrevocable step could be taken. "A daughter, who is given in marriage by a father without regard to the status of the son-in-law, wrecks both the families by her waywardness, as the muddy waters of a river in floods breach both its banks." Of the many suitors to Kurangi's hand, only two were considered most eligible —Avimaraka, the son of Sowviraraja and Jayavarma, the son of the king of Benares. Both of them were sisters' sons of Kunthibhoja, while Sowviraraja was further related to him as his wife's brother. A year before, Sowviraraja had proposed an alliance between his son and Kurangi, but he was then put off on the ground that Kurangi had not come of sufficient age for marriage. Now, however, Sowviraraja was a voluntary exile in his kingdom, living in concealment. But Kunthibhoja, not aware of this, was wonderring why the proposal had not been renewed by Sowviraraja, while the King

of Benares had sent emissaries to conclude an alliance and was pressing for an answer. The Queen of Kunthibhoja was anxious to give her daughter to her brother's son and it was only after it had become known that Sowviraraja had mysteriously disappeared from his kingdom and that his whereabouts were unknown that she consented to entertain the suit of Jayavarma of Benares. Accordingly, a mission headed by Bhuthika, Minister of Kunthihhoja, left for Benares for inviting the bridegroom and his party for marriage.

Just at that time, an event occurred which was to exercise a profound influence on the future course of events. One morning, while the Princess Kurangi was returning to the palace after playing in the garden, the palace elephant suddenly got wild, and, after killing the mahout, began to run amok. Raising dense clouds of dust, it rushed wildly hither and thither, carrying everything before it. All who were in the way were destroyed, people fled in all directions, and women raised an uproar with their screams and yells. Nothing could withstand the furious onslaught

of the elephant. Presently, it made its way to Kurangi's palanquin. Her fate seemed to be sealed. But just then, appeared on the scene one, who, as the minister described him later to Kunthibhoja, "though good-looking, was without conceit, though young, was without egotism, though strong, was considerate, though delicately made, was strong", and gave the protection which at that moment was hard to obtain. He went fearlessly for the elephant and dealt him some blows and diverted his attention from Kurangi. Soon she was rescued and taken to the palace. The elephant turned fiercely on the audacious intruder intending to despatch him. But the stranger, nothing daunted, played with the animal as with a friend, till his fury gradually abated, and then, as if ashamed of his display of valour, hastily made for his residence with bowed head, avoiding the plaudits of the multitude. The elephant was then secured with the aid of female elephants and prevented from further mischief.

Intelligence of this incident quickly reached Kunthibhoja, who desired to know to whom he

owed his daughter's deliverance. His ministers described him as godly in appearance, Brahmanical in speech and Kshatriya-like in prowess. But about his birth they just hesitated a doubt—he appeared to belong to the panchama caste. The King enquired about his father and the same baffling contradiction appeared even there. So Kunthibhoja asked his ministers to make further investigation about them; and the matter was dropped there for the time being.

It did not, however, drop there for Avimaraka and Kurangi. From the moment of their first meeting, they had begun to love each other and the peculiar circumstances of their first meeting gave a touch of romance to their love. The recollection of that incident conjured up associations in their minds which intensified their yearning to behold each other again. There was not a moment when Avimaraka was without thinking of her, and gradually he became pale and emaciated. All his attempts to stem the surging tide of passion proved unavailing and *LOVE* at last conquered him. So he ceased to struggle against it and

gave himself up to communing in solitude about her.

Similar was the condition of Kurangi. She had no taste for ornaments or flowers; had lost her appetite for food; avoided company; frequently lapsed into brown study; gave incongruous replies; did not remember what she said; and was becoming reduced and pale. But she did not open her heart to any one and kept her own counsel. Her nurse had, however, guessed how it stood with her and noticed her uncomplainingly languish and pine away. Unable to bear the sight of her suffering, she resolved at all costs to bring about the consummation of her innermost wishes and set out with her daughter Nalinika for Avimaraka's abode. But they were still apprehensive about his birth and rank. What if it should turn out that he was low-born? While they were debating this question, a voice from the air removed their doubts about his birth and assured them that all would be well. So without more hesitation they entered the residence of Avimaraka. He was just then in

one of his reveries and the greetings of the nurse consequently fell on deaf ears. He was contemplating the enchanting loveliness of his sweetheart. "If even under stress of fear, her form should be so lovely, how much more lovely should it be while in her lover's arms," said he, talking aloud. The nurse who was hearing the remark was, thus, at the very outset assured of his intense love for the princess; and her task was now easy. She roused him from his reverie and asked him what he was ruminating about. Ashamed to confess the truth, he tried to camouflage and replied that he was contemplating "Yoga Sastra". The nurse smiled and observed jestingly that there was another person in the palace who was thinking of "Yoga" more ardently and that he would do well to go there. Avimaraka was profoundly thankful to the nurse for the communication and felt as if a new life had been breathed into him. He next learnt from her the topography of the palace and the best place of access to the apartments of the princess and promised her that he would be there by midnight.

Night came, after having been long eagerly waited upon. Avimaraka was all expectant and impatient to start on the adventure. It was nearing midnight when he issued out of his residence dressed like a burglar, with a strong rope in his hand and a sword by his side. The prospect of adventure and risk always appealed to him; and he was in his element, now that he was starting on a romantic love adventure.

For the most part, the great city had gone to slumber. Night had effected a great change in the appearance of the city. In the "darkness visible" in which the whole city was enveloped, all land-marks had been obliterated. Here and there an occasional cry from a bird or muffled sounds from houses were all that disturbed the halcyon repose of the night and gave evidence of life buried within the "dead vast" of night. Avimaraka proceeded through the deserted thoroughfares, hearing occasional sounds and making running comments on what he saw and heard. Now it was the strains of music filtering through the top-floor of a high mansion. "The vibrations of the

vina must be produced by a masculine hand," thought Avimaraka. "Else the strains would not come so clearly through the closed windows. But the voice is clearly that of a lady, for the intonation is nasal and the beating of time is accompanied by the jingling of bangles." "But who is this, trying to appease his enraged wife?" he exclaimed as he proceeded further. "Grave indeed must be his offence that at this hour of night she does not relent. Or, her opposition is perhaps only factitious. For it is woman's nature to make a show of resistance, even while yielding."

Now it was the screeching of an owl that rent the solemn silence of the night. Now it was two lovers talking in whispers, the man bidding adieu again and again, obviously reluctant to part from his love. Further on, it was a thief prowling about. Avimaraka hastily avoided him in disgust. Then it was a city watchman going his rounds. Avimaraka hid himself and allowed him to pass. He then emerged from his hiding place and proceeded onward, till at last he stood before

the royal palace. He looked up for a gargoyle and tying one end of his rope into a loop threw it up against the figure. At the first throw the loop caught against the gargoyle and fastened itself tight to it. He ascended quickly up the rope and there was a gorgeous spectacle of the palace awaiting him. He admired the superb majesty of the illumined palace; but that was not the place best suited for his purpose. He would meet with many obstacles if he entered from that side. So he swiftly descended and taking the rope with him explored the other parts of the palace, till at last he knew, from the description given by the nurse, that he was before the princess's apartments. He ascended without delay and opened the windows gently. He was looking into Kurangi's apartments. He immediately discarded his guise and made his appearance in her room.

Kurangi had, throughout that afternoon, been in low spirits and having a miserable time. Nothing interested her. Her misery was further heightened by the intelligence

that her hand had been promised to Jayavarma of Benares and that the Minister Bhuthika had started for Benares to bring the bridegroom and his party to the palace. On receipt of this information, she said to herself, "It is false. I will be mistress of myself." But she could get no comfort from her position. Nalinika, the nurse's daughter, came at night-fall and secretly conveyed to her the success of her mission. Kurangi's heart leapt with joy on receipt of the news and her exhausted frame soon found rest in sleep. When Avimaraka entered, she was still asleep. Nalinika observed his arrival and was pleased for the sake of her mistress. She asked him if she might wake her up, but he forbade her saying that he must feast his eyes on her. In due course Kurangi awoke and great was her joy at seeing Avimaraka; but she was also tremulous at her first meeting. Soon she overcame her timidity and was locked in embrace with her lover. She was thereafter unwilling to lose him even for a moment, and so, it was arranged with the connivance of all the ladies of her

apartments that he should reside with her secretly in her apartments, without the matter reaching the ears of the royal couple or any of the palace officials.

For a whole year, the love affairs of Avimaraka and Kurangi ran in smooth channels. Such was the love and loyalty of the attendants for Kurangi that the matter was kept an absolute secret among them. But with so many persons in the confidence it was hardly to be expected that the truth could have been hidden for all time. It began to be talked about in whispers and in course of time, vague rumours reached the king's ears. He immediately ordered an investigation and Avimaraka was placed in great jeopardy. It was not for his life that he was afraid; but his exposure meant not only his own disgrace but tarnishing of Kurangi's name. But he somehow escaped from the palace miraculously and the affair blew off without anything of consequence being discovered. But thenceforth the apartments of Kurangi were more vigilantly guarded, barring all possibility of clandestine entrance.

Once out of the palace, Avimaraka became the victim of melancholy and dejection. His outlook on life became one of extreme disgust. Separated from his love, life had suddenly become " stale, flat and unprofitable"; and the thought of Kurangi's love-lorn condition gave added poignancy to his grief. He wandered aimlessly across the country in a burning sun and found himself in the middle of a forest. There was no shade anywhere near, and the heat was intense. Forest fires were blazing all round. Unable to endure the scorching heat, the wild animals yelled and the air was filled with their shrieks. A fierce sirocco was blowing and fiery sand particles were flying in all directions. Still, still, Avimaraka went on, with no other thought but of his love. The idea of escaping from the terrible surroundings never entered his head. But overwhelmed by the intolerable heat, he fainted and fell down. When he recovered consciousness, the sun had been intercepted by clouds and the heat was less insufferable. But the internal torments of separation were as great as ever. " What

is the wonder that clouds driven by winds thwart the sun's heat. If they could thwart the heat within me, it would be a matter for surprise. Why should I prolong this death-in-life", thought Avimaraka; and he resolved to put an end to his misery by courting death. He saw a bush-fire at some distance and proceeded to the spot; and praying to the God of Fire that his darling might be united to him even in the next world, plunged into the fire. But lo! he was unscathed. Fire had no effect on him. The trees were falling everywhere burnt by the leaping flames but those very flames were as cool to him as sandal-wood smearings. "Verily," he cried in amazement, "the God of fire takes pity on my love-stricken condition and joyously embraces me as a father would his son."

Though frustrated in his attempt, he did not relinquish his design. He bethought himself of falling from a hill-top and observing in the vicinity a mountain with cloud-capped peaks, directed his steps towards it. He ascended to the top and noticing a pool of

clear water there, bathed in it and sat down to say his prayers, before throwing himself down.

While he was thus engaged, a Vidyadhara and his wife came flying over the mountain in a *vimana.* They were proceeding to the Malaya hills to attend a gathering of Vidyadharas to render homage to their Guru and spiritual head, Agastya. Fascinating was the panorama of the earth seen from a high altitude and the Vidyadhara was struck by the diminutive appearance of every object on the face of the earth. "The mountains look like young elephants, the seas resemble tanks, the trees appear like grass and the surface of the earth is even, without revealing any ups and downs Rivers look like hair-partings on the head and even extensive mansions appear like dots."

Just as they were flying over the hill where Avimaraka was praying, the lady, being tired, wished to rest awhile before proceeding on the journey. Accordingly, the Vidyadhara decided to alight on the top of that very hill. The *vimana* was till then flying above the

cloud-region and now it began to descend swiftly towards the hill-top. During the descent, the objects which had appeared in miniature to them from that height, began quickly to assume their normal aspect. It was wonderful to behold the phenomena of the forest of clouds that seemed to move rapidly away from them during their descent, of the earth that seemed to rise quickly up towards them as if to meet them and of the mountains that, like the clouds of the rainy season, burst into view, and began to loom large and swell into huge proportions.

Then they alighted at the hill-top and began culling flowers by way of diversion. Presently the Vidyadhara noticed Avimaraka sitting alone and, struck by his prepossessing mien, approached him. Avimaraka had just finished his prayers and was about to throw himself down when looking round, he perceived a stranger standing near him. For a minute he could not believe his eyes. "Who can this be?" he thought. "Or, am I perhaps dreaming? No, I am not asleep. Or it may be what people see when nearing death." But

even that explanation did not satisfy him, and so he decided to accost him and asked him who he was. The Vidyadhara informed him that his name was Meghanada and that he was proceeding with his spouse Soudamini to the Malaya Hills. Pressed by Meghanada, Avimaraka mentioned his name but was ashamed to confess the purpose which took him there. Meghanada thereupon invoked his gift of divination, and with its aid discovered the tragic plight of Avimaraka. Commiserating with him he resolved to help him out of his difficulties and gave him a magic ring, by virtue of which a person would become invisible if he wore it on his left finger. So long as he remained invisible every person or object he touched also became invisible; and by wearing it on the right finger the person became visible again. Immensely pleased with the gift, Avimaraka tested it on his own person and was amazed to find that he did not even cast a shadow and that even the sword in his hand became invisible. Full of gratitude, he swore eternal friendship to Meghanada who, in turn, assured him of

his friendship and unfailing assistance whenever he required it. After a hearty leave-taking, Meghanada resumed his journey with his spouse, and Avimaraka hastened downhill, eager to be in the palace without the least delay. He soon reached the palace preserving his invisibility.

In the palace, Kurangi was having a wretched time ever since Avimaraka's departure. The *joie de vivere* had completely left her. Everything that reminded her of Avimaraka now caused only pain to her. Life had become a burden to her. Company was distasteful and she tried to hide her misery by seeking solitude. On entering the palace, Avimaraka observed her languor but could not approach her, as there were numerous persons about her. Kurangi at last managed to escape from the company, and, accompanied only by Nalinika, went to the terrace and beguiled herself by observing the huge, dark clouds which had drifted into the skies, intercepting the sun. Still invisible, Avimaraka followed her to the terrace. The idea of putting an end to her existence began to take

a strong hold on her and, with a view to get Nālinika out of her way, she bade her go and give orders for preparing her bath. Suspecting that she was intending to get rid of her, Nalinika declined to leave her alone. But when another attendant came from the Queen inquiring about her head-ache, Kurangi detained her and sent Nalinika away on her errand, after embracing her. She then dismissed the other servant with the reply that her head-ache was completely relieved and that her mother might be informed accordingly.

Having got all the attendants out of the way, Kurangi bolted the passage-door on her side and began to prepare for her death. Avimaraka was till then a silent spectator of all her actions. But when a huge thunder-clap came and she involuntarily shuddered and cried for help, he could remain invisible no longer. Shifting the magic ring on to his right finger he manifested himself before her. Kurangi could not contain herself for joy; and soon the lovers were clasped in embrace. All Kurangi's internal torments had vanished

in an instant. While they were in their new-found happiness, Nalinika returned to announce that the bath was ready, but grew alarmed at finding the door bolted outside. When the door was opened in response to her cries, she realised what had happened. Soon the news of Avimaraka's re-appearance and the magic ring that conferred invisibility became the common property of all who were formerly Kurangi's confidantes in her secret. Happiness once more reigned in the Princess's apartments and Avimaraka continued to live as before without fear of detection. All seemed to have ended satisfactorily for the lovers.

But not for long could things go on thus. The mission of the minister Bhuthika returned in due course bringing the bridegroom Jayavarma and his mother Sudarsana to the palace; and the marriage between Kurangi and Jayavarma was soon to be celebrated. Such a development would not square with the plans of the lovers. No doubt the Queen was still persisting that she must have definite tidings of her brother before finally consenting to her

daughter's marriage with Jayavarma. But unless they heard from him in a short time she would be obliged to temporise and consent to a marriage with Jayavarma. Kunthibhoja was also perplexed at the absence of any news of Sowviraraja. At last a ray of light seemed to illumine the position, when a message came from the ministers of Sowviraraja that they had received definite information that their king was living with his family in concealment at Kunthibhoja's capital. Kunthibhoja repaired without delay to his abode and brought him to the palace.

In due course Sowviraraja related the strange incidents which had forced him to live as an exile from his kingdom; and it was with no small gratification that Kunthibhoja learned that the year of curse had expired. But there was still a greater grief that weighed heavily on the mind of Sowviraraja, namely, the disappearance of his son Avimaraka. For a whole year he had not been heard of, and the paternal anxiety increased every day. Not merely Sowviraraja, but the entire household of Kunthibhoja

was plunged in grief at his absence. Besides, Kunthibhoja's perplexity increased, now that Sowviraraja had been discovered and no trace of his son could be found. Affairs seemed to have drifted into an unsatisfactory stale-mate.

At this juncture, the Sage Narada entered the palace and stood before Kunthibhoja and Sowviraraja. His advent was always regarded as a happy augury of the future. Both the kings hastened to pay their obeisance to him and do honour to their revered guest. After receiving the homage so dutifully paid, Narada removed a great weight off their mind by assuring them that Avimaraka was alive and happy. Though relieved of their anxiety about his existence, they were curious to know more in detail about him. So Narada sent for Sudarsana, Kunthibhoja's sister and queen of Benares, so that the explanations might take place in her hearing. Then the following conversation took place.

KUNTHIBHOJA : Oh Sage! Does Sowviraraja's son live ?

NARADA : Yes.

SOWVIRARAJA : Why does he not appear ?

NARADA : Because he is pre-occupied with matrimony.

SOWVIRARAJA : Has he married ?

KUNTHIBHOJA : In what place ?

NARADA : In the city of Vairanthya.

KUNTHIBHOJA : There is a city called Vairanthya ? Be it so; whose son-in-law has he become ?

NARADA : Of Kunthibhoja.

KUNTHIBHOJA : Who is he ?

NARADA : Thou art that Kunthibhoja, the father of Kurangi-King, Lord of Vairanthya and son of Duryodhana.

The mystery deepened. Kunthibhoja could not understand how Avimaraka could have become his son-in-law. So Narada narrated to him the whole story of Avimaraka from the moment of his seeing Kurangi when she was pursued by the elephant to his entering the palace invisibly with the aid of the magic ring. Avimaraka had married Kurangi in the *Gandharva* form, said the Sage. Kunthi-

bhoja wished to have the marriage solemnised with vedic rituals before the holy fires.

At the same time, Kunthibhoja was at his wit's end as to how to break off with his sister Sudarsana, who had come with her son Jayavarma at his express invitation. So Narada came to his rescue and recalled to her that Avimaraka was her own son, born to her by propitiating God Agni (Fire). That was the reason why the child Vishnusena was from his birth very fair-looking, brave and intelligent and endowed with superhuman strength. His father God Agni was protecting him throughout and when he threw himself into the flames, saved him from death. It was further mentioned by Narada that both Sudarsana and her sister Sulochana-the Queen of Sowviraraja-were *enceinte* simultaneously; and that, the child of Sulochana having died immediately on its birth, Sudarsana secretly handed over her child Avimaraka to her. That was how Avimaraka came to be brought up as the son of Sowviraraja and Sulochana. As it was to her own eldest son that Kurangi was married, Sudarsana

had no cause to feel aggrieved. As for Jayavarma, Narada suggested that Kurangi's sister Sumathi might be given in marriage to him. Sudarsana was perfectly satisfied with the arrangements and gave her willing approval to Narada's suggestions. Then Avimaraka and Kurangi were brought before the assembled party dressed as bridegroom and bride and benedictions showered on them. In due course, the marriages were celebrated in great *eclat*.

SUDRAKA

SOME students of Sanskrit Drama are of opinion that the Mricchakatika, of which we are here presenting the story, is the oldest extant Sanskrit play; but we have indeed no definite knowledge with regard to the exact date of the work. It has been variously assigned to periods ranging from the second century B. C. to the sixth century A.D.; but none of the opinions advanced has yet carried conviction. At the same time, there can hardly be any doubt that it is a fairly old play. In spite of a number of legends which have gathered round the name of Sudraka, its reputed author, nothing again is known of him beyond the somewhat fanciful account given in the Prologue to the play. The author is represented there as a great king of the name of Sudraka; but his identity and authorship must yet be regarded as unsolved problems. Among the curious details of his excellences given in this eulogistic prologue, we find that he was proficient in the Rig Veda and the

Sama-Veda, in Mathematics, in the art concerning the courtesan and in the lore of elephants—statements which it is not impossible to support from the knowledge displayed in the play itself. The royal author is also said to have been cured of some complaint through the grace of Siva, and after performing the horse-sacrifice and placing his son on the throne he died by entering the fire at the astonishing age of a hundred years and ten days. Whether all this describes an historical or a mythical king is not certain; and as royal authors in historic times were not averse to having works written for them, it has been maintained by those who believe in an historical Sudraka that the real author, like a wise and grateful courtier, ascribed his work to his royal patron and allowed his own name to be forgotten.

Regarding the merits of the Drama it is not necessary here to speak in detail. It will suffice perhaps to state that it is one of the very few Sanskrit dramas which are not dramatic poems but possess distinctively dramatic qualities which would make a direct

appeal to modern taste. In the history of Sanskrit literature the work is unique in many respects. Apart from the graphic picture which it presents of some interesting phases of ancient life in India, the work is truly worthy of a great dramatist in its skilful handling of a swift-moving plot of sustained interest, in its variety of incidents and characters, in its freedom from the usual fault of over-elaboration, in its sharpness of characterisation, in its use of direct and homely imageries conveyed in a clear, forcible and unaffected diction, in its witty dialogues, in its general liveliness and dramatic effect, in its mastery of deep pathos and in its rare quality of quiet humour. All these excellences invest its simple love-story with a charm peculiarly its own. In spite of its somewhat conventional happy ending, it verges almost upon tragedy, and neither the plot nor the characters can be said to be conventional. It eschews the banal theme of courtly love and intrigue, and is one of the most human of all Sanskrit plays. A ten-act comedy of middle-class life, the scene is laid in a cosmopolitan city like

Ujjayini. Although characterised as a play "full of rascals", its whole host of despicable riff-raffs of society, who at any moment are capable of all kinds of daring deeds from the stealing of a gem-casket to the starting of a revolution, furnish an excellent foil to the realistic story of the love of a Nagaraka of breeding and refinement for a famous and beautiful courtesan. The drama is bold and original in conceiving these strange characters, but they are presented not as types, but as individuals of diversified interest. The personages, if not always of a pleasant type, are yet living men and women, drawn from all grades of society, from the high-souled Brahmin to the low-down thief; and the drama includes, in its broad scope, farce and tragedy, satire and pathos, poetry and wisdom, kindliness and humanity. When we turn from the two masterpieces of Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti to this third great Sanskrit drama we find ourselves descending, as it were, from a refined atmosphere of poetry and sentiment to the firm rock of grim reality. It is a strange world which this drama unfolds, a

world in which thieves, gamblers, rogues political schemers, mendicants, courtiers, police constables, house-maids, bawds and courtesans jostle with each other freely; and the love that it depicts is not the sad and romantic love of Dushyanta and his woodland beloved, nor yet the fonder and deep conjugal love idealised in Bhavabhuti's story of Rama and Sita, but simply and curiously, the love of a man about town for a courtesan, which is nevertheless as pure, strong and tender. A fitting back-ground is supplied to this strange love by the equally strange world in which it moves; and an inventive originality is displayed by linking the private affairs of the hero and the heroine with a political intrigue which involves the city and the kingdom.

The curious name of the drama 'The Little Clay Cart' is derived from an episode in the sixth Act, which leads to the discovery of the heroine's jewels in the toy clay cart of the hero's little son, and which gives rise to complications of the plot until they are finally resolved in the *denouement*.

MRICCHAKATIKA OR THE LITTLE CLAY CART

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CHARUDATTA—A Brahmin Merchant of Ujjaini.

ROHASENA—His son.

MAITREYA—His friend and companion.

VARDHAMANAKA—His servant.

PALAKA—King of Ujjayini.

SAMSTHANAKA—The King's brother-in-law.

STHAVARAKA—His servant.

SAMVAHAKA—A rambler who turns Buddhist monk.

MATTURA & DARDURAKA—Gamblers.

REBBILA—A famous musician.

SARVILAKA—A burglar.

ARYAKA—A herdsman who becomes king.

VIRAKA & CHANDANAKA—Police officers.

A COURTIER AND FRIEND OF SAMSTHANAKA.

A JUDGE

DHUTADEVI—Wife of Charudatta.

RADANIKA—Charudatta's maid-servant.

VASANTASENA—A famous courtesan of Ujjaini and lover of Charudatta.

MADANIKA—Maid-servant of Vasantasena.

MOTHER OF VASANTASENA.

THE LITTLE CLAY CART

THERE lived in Ujjayini a young man of breeding and refinement, named Charudatta, who was by profession a wealthy merchant but by birth a high-souled Brahmin. By the qualities of large-heartedness, nobility and uprightness, as well as by his culture and good taste, he had won the admiration and respect of the whole city, but his princely liberality had in course of time reduced him to extreme poverty; for, never was a needy man turned from his door, and he had adorned the city of Ujjayini with mansions, cloisters, parks, temples, pools and fountains. Deserted by all in his adversity and disillusioned he would have abjured the world and sought the hermitage, but that his noble and faithful wife Dhutadevi, his little son Rohasena and his whole-hearted friend Maitreya had cheerfully shared his poverty and distress. Of his large train of retainers, only two remained in

his old and decayed house, the maid Radanika and his personal servant Vardhamanaka.

One night, after Charudatta had finished his evening devotions, he said to Maitreya : "Friend, I have made my offerings to the household deities. Will you now go and offer sacrifice to the Divine Mothers at the place where the four roads meet?" "Not I, indeed," replied Maitreya, "you have worshipped the gods, but have they been gracious to you? What is the use of worshipping?" "Speak not profanely", said Charudatta, "it is the duty of every householder." "No, I am not going", replied Maitreya doggedly, "you must send somebody else. Poor Brahmin that I am, everything goes wrong with me; it is like a reflection in the mirror, the right side becomes the left, the left becomes the right." At that hour of evening, even the king's highway was not safe,—such was the state of law and order prevailing in the city! Courtesans, rogues, bawds, gamblers, thieves, political schemers and royal favourites were abroad; and how could a timid Brahmin like Maitreya go out alone? At last, on the assur-

ance that Radanika would accompany him with a light, Maitreya opened the front door and came out.

Suddenly the lamp went out. Near the door, under the cover of falling darkness, was standing for shelter the unfortunate Vasantasena, a famous courtesan of Ujjayini. She had put out the light with her skirt and entered, silently and unperceived, into the house. In confusion, Radanika waited, while Maitreya went back to re-light the lamp.

Who in Ujjayini did not know Vasantasena for her grace, dignity, wealth and beauty, and who, except a cowardly, ignorant and brutal wretch like the king's brother-in-law, Samsthanaka, did not honour her? Strange as it may seem, it was possible in that ancient society to be a courtesan and yet retain self-respect. As in the Athens of Perikles, so in ancient India, the courtesan was not without accomplishments; she possessed wealth, beauty and power, as well as literary and artistic taste, and occupied an important position in social life. Men of wit, culture and

rank did not disdain her society, and this contact probably saved her from degradation.

All this, however, did not prevent the king's brother-in-law Samsthanaka, a man of the most depraved and despicable character, from attempting to win her person by cunning and gold. His position as the king's brother-in-law and his wealth made him believe that he could do whatever he liked; but Vasantasena had never been mercenary, and, as she was universally honoured, he did not dare use force. In spite of his association with courtiers of breeding and refinement, he had skill only in perfidy and deceit. All Ujjayini hated and feared him for his ignorant conceit and brutal lust, and it was no wonder that Vasantasena found his attention most unwelcome.

That evening Vasantasena had been abroad in the street accompanied by her servants, who however had fallen behind. Taking this opportunity, Samsthanaka, with his profligate followers, had pursued her, and made the most degrading and insulting offers of love. Frightened and disgusted, she tried to repulse them,

assuring them proudly that it was merit alone, and not brutal violence, which inspired a woman's love. In vain did she offer them her jewels and her ornaments to make them desist, and in vain did she attempt to fly from them like a timid deer. In the course of the pursuit, however, they came near the good merchant's house. Her profligate pursuers thus unintentionally befriended her by bringing her for refuge to the very door of the great Charudatta, of whom she had heard so much, whom she had once seen in the park where Kama's temple stood, and who was now destined to play such an important part in her life.

Eluding Samsthanaka and his associates under cover of darkness, she slipped unperceived into the house; and Charudatta, mistaking her for the maid Radanika, bade her enter. Losing sight of her, Samsthanaka caught hold of the waiting Radanika by mistake, but Maitreya came up presently to the rescue, and reprimanded him severely for his rudeness. The cowardly Samsthanaka was naturally afraid of Charudatta's eminent virtues, but he would not go away without

finding Vasantasena. His wiser courtier, however, advised him to depart. "To hold a horse" he said "you need a rein, and to hold an elephant, you require a chain. To hold a woman, you must use a heart, and if you have not one, it is wise to go away in peace". Reluctantly but with a great deal of bravado, Samsthanaka left, pronouncing a threat of revenge if Charudatta did not hand over Vasantasena to him.

All this happened outside the house. Charudatta was sitting inside in the dark room when the frightened Vasantasena entered. Not knowing what had happened, and mistaking her for Radanika, he gave her his cloak to cover up little Rohasena lest the child be chilled by evening dews. Vasantasena, finding the garment scented with jasmine-flowers, said to herself: "His youth does not indeed show indifference!" Finding her still silent and motionless, Charudatta again bade her enter the inner apartments, but remembering her ignoble profession, she could only sigh to herself: "Alas, my misfortune gives me no admission inside." "Come now, Radanika,

will you not even answer ?" cried Charudatta in sadness and impatience, still overwhelmed by his own sense of poverty which made him think that even his maid was slighting him. But Maitreya and Radanika having come up in the meantime, he perceived his mistake and exclaimed: "Then who is this? I have degraded her by the touch of my garment." "Degraded!" repeated Vasantasena to herself "no, exalted!" Charudatta was wondering who the half-veiled lady might be, like the waning moon half-hidden by the autumnal clouds; but the next moment he checked himself in his impertinent curiosity: "She must be another man's wife, not meet for me to gaze on her". Maitreya, who had learnt of her identity from Samsthanaka, soon enlightened him. "What, this is Vasantasena!" exclaimed Charudatta; and not being insensible to love, he sighed over his declining fortunes for his inability to give expression to the thoughts of love which arose spontaneously in him. "Let my desire", he said to himself, "sink suppressed in silence, like the wrath of a coward which he dares not

utter." But with his innate gallantry, he felt he had done wrong in greeting the charming lady as a servant, and begged of her to pardon him for the unwitting offence done to her by his mistake. "It is I who have offended by this unseemly intrusion. I bow my head to seek your forgiveness", she replied.

It was a case of love at first sight for both of them, but for the first time Vasantasena was really in love. Witty and wise, disillusioned and sophisticated, she had yet a heart of romance, and her love was true and deep even in a social position which made such a feeling difficult. Very sadly she realised that the woman who admitted the love of many men was false to them all. Much wealth and position she had achieved by an obligatory and hereditary calling, but her heart was truly against it, and it brought her no happiness. Her maid Madanika, brought up in the usual tradition, disapproved of her falling in love with a poor man. "But, lady," she protested, "it is said that Charudatta is very poor." "Hence do I love him more" replied her mistress. "A courtesan whose heart is fixed

on a poor man is hardly to be censured by the world." "Yet, lady," said Madanika, with mild remonstrance again, "do the bees, greedy for honey, swarm in the mango-tree after it has shed its blossoms?" "Therefore are they called greedy wantons", replied Vasantasena. The breath of the new emotion, which had now come to her, quickened all her deeper and nobler instincts into a pervading flame, and burned to ashes her baser self.

But, like a truly awakened woman, she was embarrassed in the presence of Charudatta at their first unexpected meeting, and felt that she could tarry no longer. In order that this meeting should not be the last, she wanted some excuse to come back again. After a little thought, she said: "If truly I have found favour in your sight, sir, I should be glad to leave my jewels in your house. It was for the sake of these jewels that those scoundrels followed me." "But", replied Charudatta "this house is hardly suited for the trust." "You mistake, sir," she smiled in reply "treasures are entrusted to men, and not to houses." What more could Charudatta say?

The jewels were left in trust. Charudatta then accompanied her through the dark streets and saw her safely home.

Charudatta, in his prosperous days, had a servant, named Samvahaka, whose duty was to massage his master. After Charudatta's decline in fortune, Samvahaka's occupation was gone, and he took to desperate gambling. But luck was against him; and one day, which happened to be the very next day after the meeting of Charudatta and Vasantasena, he fled from the gambling house and concealed himself from his creditors in a deserted temple, only to be soon discovered by the master of the gambling house, Mathura and a gambler, both hardened and pitiless sinners, who demanded of him ten gold pieces which he had lost to them. An altercation ensued, ending in quarrel and violence. At this point, a clever rogue, Darduraka, who was passing by, appeared on the scene, and taking pity on the much-harassed fellow-gambler Samvahaka, engaged the gambling master and his companion in an angry discussion, during which Samvahaka managed to escape into Vasanta-

sena's house, which stood nearby, just at the moment when Vasantasena had been confessing to her maid Madanika her love for Charudatta. When she learned that Samvahaka had once served Charudatta, she received him with honour and compassion and paid his gambling debts. Overwhelmed by her kindness and full of self-pity, the grateful Samvahaka at last resolved to turn a Buddhist monk.

The same night Charudatta and Maitreya went to a concert to listen to the charming songs of one Rebhila. Charudatta was by no means an austere or self-denying man, a mere paragon of virtue, but he was a perfect man of the world, who did not disdain gambling, nor shared his friend Maitreya's bias against the courtesan, and he loved literature, art and music. His great virtues were softened by the milk of human kindness. In spite of his slender means, his love of music made him go to the concert, which he enjoyed with keen appreciation. They came home after midnight, and, greatly tired, went to sleep. Vasantasena's treasures were still in the house; and Maitreya was charged, before he went to sleep, to keep

the gem-casket safely by his side. After a while, a needy and skilful thief, named Sarvilaka, broke into the room, in which Charudatta and his friend were sleeping, by making a hole in the rickety wall. This Sarvilaka, a Brahmin by birth and a man of some education, was a friend of Darduraka, like whom he had turned into a clever and daring man about town. He had, in the meantime, fallen in love with Vasantasena's maid Madanika and wanted to marry her. Reduced to poverty and reckless life, he had at last resolved to acquire by theft the means of buying her freedom. He was not aware, however, that he was breaking into the house of the poor Brahmin, for whom even a low-down thief like him cherished great respect. In the morning, Charudatta and his friend woke to find the casket and the thief gone. It affected the good merchant deeply, inasmuch as it affected his honour, for who would now believe the truth about the theft? Powerless poverty was doomed to wake suspicion. Radanika, who had first detected the theft, went to inform Charudatta's wife of the disaster, but assured her mistress that both her

master and his friend were unhurt, and that only the ornaments left by the courtesan had been stolen. "Girl," replied the wife sadly, "how can you say that my lord is uninjured? Better he were injured in body than in character. For, now the people of Ujjayini will say that my lord himself committed the crime because of his poverty." To save her husband's honour, the good wife, a noble and gentle lady worthy of her husband, sent him her pearl necklace which she had received from her mother's house. When Charudatta was told of this, he exclaimed with humbled pride: "What, my wife takes pity on me? Alas, now I am poor indeed!" But if his change of fortune had made him bitter, it had not debased his mind; it had only taught him to take things at their right value. Soon he realised the nobility which prompted his wife's offer, and said to Maitreya: "But no, I am not poor; for I have a wife whose love outlasts my wealthy days; in thee I have a friend who is faithful to me through good and evil; and I have truth and honour which nought can take away. Maitreya, take the necklace, and go to

Vasantasena. Tell her in my name that we have gambled away the gem-casket, forgetting it was not our own, and that we trust she will accept this necklace in its place." But the sagacious Maitreya, with his dog-like faithfulness, was uneasy and suspicious. He took his friend's love for Vasantasena for a degrading infatuation and his friend's regard for honour with respect to a courtesan for a foolish act. "What!" he said in surprise "you must not give away this necklace, the pride of the four seas, for that cheap thing left by the courtesan". "Not so, my friend," replied Charudatta, "she showed her trust in leaving with us her treasure. Such a faith cannot be overvalued." Scrupulous in returning Vasantasena's pledge, he could not accept his friend's worldly-wise advice ; and Maitreya had at last to depart with the necklace to Vasantasena.

Early next morning, Sarvilaka came to Vasantasena's house to buy Madanika's freedom with the stolen casket. On Madanika's enquiry as to how a poor man like him could come by the gems, he had to

confess to her the facts concerning the theft of the casket. Madanika was horrified. "Oh, Sarvilaka," she said "for a mere nothing—for a woman—you have risked two things." What things?" asked Sarvilaka, somewhat puzzled. "Your life and your character," replied the honest girl. When he showed her the jewels, she could recognise them as those which her mistress had left at Charudatta's place. Sarvilaka now felt truly ashamed, but he could not, even if he desired, restore the gems to the good man, for that act would be inconsistent with prudence. On Madanika's advice, he then pretended to be a servant of Charudatta's and sought to restore the jewels to Vasantasena. But, in the meantime, coming in search of Madanika, Vasantasena had been an unwilling listener to the whole conversation. Her own recent experience of love and her innate nobility of character made her feel for the poor lovers, and appreciate the daring of the man and the honesty of the maid. She accepted the casket without telling them anything, but as Sarvilaka was turning to leave, she said to him:

"Sir, will you undertake a return commission of mine?". Sarvilaka naturally hesitated, for he could not, in the circumstances, carry back any message to Charudatta. "And this commission is—?" he faltered. "You will be good enough to accept Madanika" replied Vasantasena quietly to the astonished man. "Madam, I do not understand," he faltered again. "But I do," replied Vasantasena, "Charudatta told me that I was to give Madanika to the man who should return these jewels. You are therefore to understand that he makes you a present of her." "Ah, she sees through me," said Sarvilaka to himself, but he blessed Charudatta's name and was grateful to her for making Madanika a freed woman.

They left with happiness in their hearts, but on the way they received hints of an impending political revolution. Those were days of stirring deeds, and the private affairs of the lovers became curiously linked with a political intrigue which involved the city and the kingdom. King Palaka had been despotic and cruel, and the wanton acts of his brother-in-

law Samsthanaka had also made the people discontented. A soothsayer had declared that a young herdsman, named Aryaka was to become king. Believing in this prophecy and alarmed thereat, king Palaka had taken the innocent herdsman from his hamlet and thrown him into prison. This Aryaka happened to be a friend of Sarvilaka's; and as soon as Sarvilaka left Vasantasena's house with Madanika, this news reached him. In spite of poor Madanika's entreaties, he leapt out of the bullock-cart which was carrying them, directing his servant to reach his newly-made bride to the house of his friend Rebhila. Sarvilaka departed, vowing not only to release his friend Aryaka but also to hasten the revolution to place Aryaka on the throne.

In the meantime, Maitreya came to Vasantasena's palace to hand over the pearl necklace as a recompense for the gem-casket lost by Charudatta. Unaware of the circumstance that Sarvilaka had in the meantime brought back the casket, strangely, to its real owner, Maitreya delivered his message. Much amused and pleased, Vasantasena said to herself: " It

was stolen by a thief, and he is so proud that he says he gambled it away. I love him for that." She accepted the necklace with pleasure, in order to use it as a pretext to see Charudatta once more, and said to Maitreya : " Sir, pray tell the worthy gambler Charudatta in my name that I shall pay him a visit this evening." The suspicious Maitreya thought that the greedy courtesan was not satisfied with the pearl necklace and wanted to get more out of Charudatta in redemption of the pledge.

The same evening, during a heavy storm, Vasantasena reached Charudatta's house. She brought with her the gem-casket, and after discovering it and explaining how she had come by it, she gently rebuked him for the distrust shown of her by sending the pearl necklace instead. The storm and rain increasing in violence in the meantime, she was compelled to spend the night at Charudatta's house. Charudatta had now realised the nobility of her character, her generosity, and the depth and truth of her love, and he came to love her in return with an equally deep and tender affection.

The next morning, when the maid came to wake her up, it appeared all so strange to Vasantasena herself. She could hardly believe that she, an outcast of society, had been able to win the love of the great Charudatta, the ornament of Ujjayini, and asked half-incredulously of the maid if all that were true. "What! did I find my way into his inner apartments?," she enquired of the maid. "Not only that," replied the maid "but into everyone's heart." But Vasantasena was still afraid lest she had been a source of trouble to Charudatta. "I fear his household is vexed," she asked with deep concern. "They will be vexed," replied the maid "only when—" "When?" she interrupted anxiously. "When you will depart", replied the maid. Vasantasena was still wearing the pearl necklace which Charudatta had given her. Now she took it off, and sent it through the maid to Charudatta's wife with the message: "Worthy Charudatta's virtues have won me, made me his slave, and therefore your slave also. So let this necklace be the ornament of your neck, to which

it rightly belongs." But the dignified wife returned the necklace, saying that it was not proper for her to take the necklace with which her husband had favoured Vasantasena in his affection, and that the only ornament she valued was her husband. Nevertheless, both Charudatta and his wife, as well as his whole household, inclusive of the suspicious but well-meaning Maitreya, had now recognised the truth and pity of her great love and realised how much it would mean to her if her love were legalised.

Vasantasena now met for the first time Charudatta's little son, Rohasena. She found the child peevish, because he had now only a little clay cart to play with, instead of finer toys. A great affection and pity overwhelmed her heart, and she said to herself: "To think that this little child has to suffer because others are wealthy! Ah, mighty Fate, the destinies of men, uncertain as the water-drops which fall upon a lotus-leaf, seem to thee but playthings!" She was fascinated by the lovely face of the petulant child, which was very like his father's, and stretched out her arms in that

great hunger for motherhood which had been denied to her: "Come, my little son, embrace me". Naturally suspicious, the child asked of his maid: "Who is she, Radanika?" Vasantasena replied coaxingly: "A slave of your father's, purchased by his merits", which statement Radanika hastened to modify tactfully by saying, "This lady is your mother, child." "Away," replied the child, "you tell me untruth, Radanika. How can she be my mother when she wears such fine things?" "My child", said Vasantasena, ashamed and in tears, "your innocent lips can say terrible things!" She took off her ornaments and said tearfully: "Now I become your mother. You take these trinkets and have a gold cart made for you." "Go away," said the child again, "I will not take them, you cry at parting with them." Wiping away her tears and smiling, she filled the toy clay cart with her jewels and said: "I weep no more. Go, darling, and play. There! you must have a little gold cart to play with." Vasantasena's love had now made her realise the emptiness of riches and the fulness of a pure and tender affection.

Vardhamanaka now came and informed Vasantasena that he was waiting at the side-door with a covered cart to take her to the old flower-garden, named Puspakarandaka, where Charudatta, who had left early in the morning, was waiting for her. While Vasantasena was getting ready, Vardhamanaka went back with his cart to fetch some cushions which he had forgotten. In the meantime, a comedy of errors happened, which nearly ended in tragedy. Samsthanaka's servant Sthavaraka had been directed by the master to take a bullock-cart to him at the same old garden, which was the property of the king's brother-in-law. The highway having been blocked by villagers' wagons, Sthavaraka had stopped his cart at the side-door of Charudatta's orchard and had gone for a moment to put his shoulder to the wheel of another cart which had got stuck in the mud. Finding Sthavaraka's cart at the side-door, Vasantasena entered it without knowing: and without knowing also Sthavaraka, coming back, drove it on, thus cruel fate conspiring to put Vasantasena once more into the hands of Samsthanaka.

Unaware of what had happened, Vardhamanaka came back with Charudatta's cart and waited at the side-door. Soon he heard some one entering the covered cart with the tinkling of anklet-rings, and thinking that it was Vasantasena he also drove on towards the garden where Charudatta was waiting. But it was Aryaka who had surreptitiously entered the cart. With the help of his good friend Sarvilaka, the young herdsman, who had been imprisoned by king Palaka, had just broken jail, killed the jailer, half broken his fetters, escaped and run away. There was great excitement in the city over the prisoner's escape, and police constables were running about everywhere in search of him. He managed to elude them all and concealed himself near the side-door of Charudatta's house. Finding Vardhamanaka's empty cart presently driving up, he sought in it a temporary hiding-place, his half-broken prison-chains having caused the tinkling sound which deceived Vardhamanaka. As Vardhamanaka was getting up his bullocks to go, two police officers, in search of Aryaka, walked up and

stopped the cart on the road-side. On being informed that it was Charudatta's cart conveying Vasantasena to the Puspakarandaka garden, one of the officers Chandanaka would let it pass, Charudatta's name acting as a magic charm; but the other officer Viraka became suspicious and would not let the cart go without inspection. After some discussion, Chandanaka, agreeing to inspection, entered the cart and looked about. Aryaka immediately threw himself on his mercy, and Chandanaka, a softer-hearted man, agreed to protect him. But Chandanaka's report after inspection that all was well could not convince Viraka. To save his protege in the cart, to whom he had given his word, Chandanaka contrived an angry discussion and quarrel, which ended in his maltreating his brother officer and allowing Aryaka to escape in Charudatta's cart. Now that he had made an enemy of Viraka, the Chief Constable and king's favourite, Chandanaka made up his mind to throw in his lot with the revolutionaries, headed by Sarvilaka. In the meantime, Vardhamanaka drove up the cart, in which Aryaka lay hidden, to the park where

Charudatta was awaiting Vasantasena impatiently. To their amazement, Maitreya and Charudatta discovered the fugitive in the cart; but as Aryaka related his story and sought his protection, Charudatta removed his fetters, promised him friendship, lent him the cart to escape, and left the park immediately lest he should arouse the suspicion of royal officers.

Samsthanaka's servant, on the other hand, drove up to another part of the same park his master's cart which Vasantasena had entered by mistake. To his amazement, Samsthanaka's courtier, who had gone forward, discovered Vasantasena sitting happy in the cart, and at first thought that she had come of her own accord to favour the king's brother-in-law. But when he learned of her mistake concerning the cart, he realised her peril and tried to shield and save her from the brutal and ignorant Samsthanaka. Samsthanaka himself was at first greatly flattered that Vasantasena should herself come and visit him; but very soon Sthavaraka disillusioned him by relating the story of the mistake, and Vasantasena in her

turn spurned him with her foot in disgust, thereby rousing his fierce anger. His sense of his own importance was outraged by Vasantasena's scornful repulse; and, passion-blind, he threatened to kill her for despising his proposition and for kicking him with her foot. But both Sthavaraka and the courtier refused to aid and abet him in his cowardly and brutal design of murdering in cold blood an innocent and helpless woman. Sthavaraka was a simple and God-fearing man who was not easy to win over. The courtier was a man of good taste and breeding who, despite his loose life and his dependence on his patron, did his best to check Samsthanaka's intended violence. Very artfully the cunning scoundrel pretended to grow calm, managed to get rid of his followers by deceit, and then seizing Vasantasena alone, began to persecute her again with his shameful proposals. She repulsed him with great spirit and with a fearlessness born of her new love for Charudatta. When Samsthanaka in his anger taunted her as the *inamorata* of a beggarly Brahmin, she was not ashamed but retorted with perfect courage: " Delightful

words! Pray proceed, for you speak my praise." "Just let that son of a slave rescue you now," said Samsthanaka with a sneer, to which she replied with great coolness: "He would have rescued me if he were here." Growing furious, Samsthanaka took her by the throat; she would not scream for help, for it would be a shame that Vasantasena's helpless cry should be heard loudly outside, but she would remember her beloved Charudatta and bless his name. "What, still dost thou repeat that rascal's name?" snarled Samsthanaka, blinded by rage, as he strangled her; but on the verge of imminent death, the name of Charudutta was still on her lips, and she murmured in a struggling tone: "My homage be to Charudatta!"

When Sthavaraka and the courtier returned, Samsthanaka tried to deceive them; but, they soon discovered the horrible facts, he offered bribes to the courtier and then tried to lay the deed to his charge. Disgusted and horrified, the courtier cursed him: and finding that it would be folly to remain there any longer, he also made up his mind to leave his

patron and join the conspirators, Sarvilaka, Chandanaka and the rest. The poor Sthavaraka was put in irons on the palace-tower by his wicked master.

To cover up his own guilt and to complete his mean revenge on Charudatta, Samsthanaka now formed the plan of going to court at once and lodging a complaint that the merchant Charudatta had enticed Vasantasena into the old park Puspakarandaka and strangled her there for her money. The next day the court sat for the trial, and Charudatta, who could not yet believe that such a thing could happen, was summoned to answer the terrible accusation of Samsthanaka. In the course of the trial, it appeared from the evidence of Vasantasena's mother (who, however, refused to bear witness against Charudatta) that Vasantasena had spent the night of the storm at Charudatta's house; while Viraka, who had come to court to testify to the escape of Aryaka and to lodge his complaint against Chandanaka, gave evidence that she had left Charudatta's house the next morning in Charudatta's cart to meet the latter at the park.

It was also proved that there had been a struggle at the park, which apparently ended in the murder of a woman, for the body of a woman, torn by wild beasts, was found there. The judge, a sympathetic man, was still reluctant to believe that stain of any kind could attach to Charudatta's reputation; for it was extraordinary that he, whose liberality was well known throughout Ujjayini and whose sense of honour once made him send to Vasantasena a necklace of pearls in place of stolen jewels, should now for a mere trifle—for her money—murder a helpless woman whom he loved. Was it possible that Charudatta was the man who could repay a woman's love with blood? But at this moment something happened which turned the circumstantial evidence still more against Charudatta.

Maitreya had been commissioned by Charudatta to go to Vasantasena's house and return the jewels which she in her affection had given to Rohasena for the making of a gold cart. But on the way to her house, Maitreya heard the alarming news that Charudatta had been summoned to court. Without any delay he

rushed into the court-room, and on being informed of the baseless charge against his dear friend, he was so indignant that he attacked the false accuser angrily with his staff, calling Samsthanaka by all the names that he deserved. During the scuffle which ensued, the jewels which Maitreya had been carrying on his person fell to the ground. In view of Charudatta's poverty and in the absence of satisfactory explanation of Maitreya's possession of the jewels, the incident seemed to deceive the judge and establish a motive for the crime. Charudatta was condemned to ignominious death by king Palaka, although the judge recommended him, according to the law, for mercy. In his life Charudatta had already realised that fate played with men as buckets at the well, one rose as another fell. Aware of the vanity of all things, he could not value life over-highly; but he valued his honour more than his life. He received the sentence of death with equanimity, more especially as the loss of Vasantasena had now made him lose his new interest in life. But he was overwhelmed in so far as

the condemnation affected his honour as a man for having murdered a woman (and the cruel irony of it, a woman whom he deeply loved) and also that he should leave a heritage of shame to the little son to whom he was so greatly devoted. That such a stain should attach to his character was unbearable to him, but he was powerless against cruel fate. When everything conspired to make appearances go against him, he lost all interest in the trial and hardly made any attempt to defend himself against the hateful charges, which he emphatically denied but which he could not rebut.

The headsmen, two sympathetic souls who regretted the duty they had to perform, led Charudatta to the place of execution through the city-streets and proclaimed as was the custom, his guilt with the beat of drum. Charudatta was still cherished with affection, and as the much-hated Samasthanaka was his accuser, popular sympathy was with him. A large crowd followed him as he was led through the streets. Sthavaraka, who had been confined and enchained by his master

Samsthanaka in his palace-tower heard the shouts and the proclamation below, as the crowd passed along the street in front of Samsthanaka's palace. That innocent Charudatta should be condemned to death for another's crime through the perfidy of his inhuman master became unbearable to him. He leapt down through an open window, broke his fetters in his excitement and rushed out to bear witness to Charudatta's innocence by revealing the truth and denouncing Samsthanaka for his crime. About the same time, Samsthanaka, coming out of his house to gloat over the downfall of Charudatta, was taken aback at the sight of Sthavaraka; but recovering himself quickly, he denounced Sthavaraka's words as lies invented out of spiteful motive against his master who had imprisoned him for the theft of some ornaments. A disgraced slave could convince nobody, and the cunning displayed by his master made light of his words. No escape now seemed possible for Charudatta, who prepared himself for certain death after he had taken his last leave of Maitreya and his little

son. Samsthanaka now urged the executioners to finish their work quickly. Suddenly, in great agitation appeared on the scene a Buddhist monk, accompanied by a lady, shouting with uplifted hands—" Good gentlemen, hold, hold !" Everyone looked up with surprise and found with great delight that it was Samvahaka, who had turned a Buddhist monk, and with him Vasantasena herself, saying : " Good gentlemen, I am the wretch for whose sake Charudatta was condemned to death."

How was it that Vasantasena could come back to life and appear on the scene at the last moment ? When Samsthanaka pitilessly strangled her in the garden, she only lost consciousness and fell down motionless. After Samsthanaka had left her for dead covering up her body with dry leaves, Charudatta's old servant Samvahaka, whom Vasantasena had released from gambling debts and who had in the meantime turned a Buddhist monk, came into the garden to wash his rags in the pool there. By chance he came near the spot where the body of Vasantasena had been buried in leaves, and sat down to dry his rags.

Suddenly he heard a sigh proceeding from the heap of leaves and some movements, for Vasantasena had now begun to recover consciousness and move her limbs. Coming to the spot, Samvahaka discovered and recognised her, greatly delighted to find that it was Vasantasena, still alive, to whom he once owed his freedom. With great care he revived her and conducted her to a monastery nearby. After hearing her story, he was conducting her next day to Charudatta's house; but on the way they saw the large crowd, following Charudatta, from a distance and heard the proclamation. "Sister in Buddha," said Samvahaka, addressing her, "Charudatta is being led to his death for murdering you." "For my wretched sake!" replied Vasantasena in terror, "quick, quick, oh lead me there!" They rushed forward just in time to save Charudatta from his imminent death.

In the meantime, the revolution started by Sarvilaka and his friends had succeeded. They had stormed the palace, killed the wanton and cruel king Palaka and placed their friend Aryaka, the fugitive herdsman whom

Charudatta once befriended, on the throne. As soon as they had heard of Charudatta's distress Sarvilaka hastened with his men to the place of execution, reaching there almost immediately after Vasantasena had made her appearance. He brought the good tidings of the overthrow of Palaka's tyrannical rule, and a message from the new king Aryaka, who had not forgotten Charudatta's friendly act, that the king, in grateful remembrance, had rewarded him with the principality of Kushavati on the bank of the Vena and had bestowed on Vasantasena the title of wedded wife, which made her free of her profession. The monk Samvahaka was rewarded by being appointed superior over the Buddhist monasteries of the realm. The crowd now dragged before Charudatta the wretched and grovelling Samsthanaka, who was mean enough to beg piteously for the life he had forfeited, and shouted for his death sentence; but he was magnanimously pardoned by the man whom he once sought to injure most grievously.*

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* In writing this story of the great Sanskrit Drama Mricchakatika, the writer has received assistance from the English translations of the drama by Wilson and Ryder in the phrasing of the story in English; but, throughout, the original has been consulted.

KALIDASA

KALIDASA, is unquestionably the greatest of all Indian poets, and he occupies a place equal to that of Shakespeare in the world's literature. Nothing has been definitely settled about his date. Some authorities are of opinion that he belonged to the 1st century B.C , and others hold that he flourished somewhere about the 6th century A.D. But eminent Orientalists and scholars are of opinion that Kalidasa belonged to the beginning of the 5th century A.D. He is the author of three dramas, Sakuntalam, Vikramorvasiyam and Malavikagnimitram, of which the first named is undoubtedly his master-piece and ranks very high in the world's classics.

The story of Sakuntalam is narrated in simple verse in the Mahabharatam and Kalidasa has adopted the story for the plot of his drama. But Kalidasa's indebtedness to the original stops with the general outlines of the

story. Apart from the general scheme of the story, there is nothing in common between Kalidasa's dramatised version and the original plot. If it is true of any writer that "*Nihil quod tetigit non ornavit*" it is so pre-eminently true of Kalidasa. Like the alchemist, he aimed at converting the dull material in his hands into sterling gold and succeeded to a remarkable degree.

On the occasions on which Kalidasa differs from the original, he displays rare poetical qualities and fine ideas of dramatic effect. His æsthetic sense and moral conceptions render it possible for him to alter the incidents in the original which make the hero Dushyanta appear in a disagreeable light, with the result that Kalidasa makes us love and pity him instead. Thus, in the original, Dushyanta cleanly forgets that he had ever wooed Sakuntala and turns her off from his palace. Such forgetfulness would be strange and inexplicable, save on the assumption that Dushyanta was a heartless villain who had played the libertine with so many innocent girls that he could not recollect this parti-

cular incident. Such a conception of the hero would at once strike a blow at the moral basis of the plot. In order to make it acceptable to the public and in order to induce belief in the story of Dushyanta's forgetfulness, Kalidasa had to vary the story somewhat and introduce the quite natural episode of Durvasa and his curse. The whole story is made probable at one stroke, and the readers are not left with incredulity and disappointment at the strange behaviour of Dushyanta.

Kalidasa wrote some other books, of which Meghadhuta occupies the first rank. We know very little of the personal history of this great genius, except that he flourished under the patronage of a great king called Vikrama.

SAKUNTALA

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

DUSHYANTA—King.
MATHAVYA—King's Jester.
KANWA—A sage and father of Sakuntala.
MATHALI—Indra's Charioteer.
HERMITS.
FISHERMAN.
SARVADAMANAKA—Son of Dushyanta.
DURVASA.
KING'S CHARIOTEER.
KASYAPA.
SAKUNTALA.
ANASUYA—A Companion of Sakuntala.
PRIYAMVADA—A Companion of Sakuntala.
GAUTAMI—Matron.
MENAKA—Nymph.

SAKUNTALA

IN the ancient days of our history, India was said to have attained some of its greatest power under the powerful Paurava dynasty, from which were descended the Kurus and the Pandus, who were the heroes of the great epic of the Mahabharata. One of the greatest monarchs of this dynasty was the mighty Dushyanta, said to be seventh in descent from the Moon. His kingdom was bounded by the four seas, and he was the valued friend of gods and great men, a perfect hero of extraordinary strength and wonderful prowess, of matchless wisdom and admirable goodness.

Hunting was one of his favourite recreations, and once upon a time he led a large expedition into a dense forest. Having exhausted the game there, he went into another forest. Suddenly, a beautiful fawn flashed before him, and he ordered his chariot to go in pursuit. The noble horses sprang forward, and soon the great car had forged ahead

and Dushyanta found himself alone in the wilderness with but one attendant.

Across the glade of the cool forest, rushed the golden fawn like a streak of yellow, hardly touching the ground in its nimble bounds. Just behind the bushes which fringed the glade, it paused, bending its graceful neck to glance behind with wild eyes of terror, while its slender form seemed to contract in fearful anticipation of attack. For a second it stood so, and then was off again; for, into the open space had flashed the golden chariot, with the resplendent figure of its enemy, wielding his great bow as the mighty Siva wields his trident.

"Where is the antelope?" asked the King in astonishment. "We have been very swift in our pursuit, and yet it seems to have eluded us."

"Sire", answered the charioteer, "I have been checking the horses a little, on account of the unevenness of the ground. Hence the deer has out-distanced us. Now, the path is level."

"Let them go at full speed then."

The horses sprang forward, with long necks outstretched and nervous ears bent low. Their graceful bodies almost touched the earth, as they raced with the clouds of dust raised by their own speed, and the white plumes on their heads stood erect against the wind.

"Oh," cried the King joyously, "how wonderful is the speed of my horses, which are like the steeds of the Wind and the Sun! Ah! there is the deer. Steady the car now, charioteer, while I take aim."

"Stop, King, stop," suddenly shouted some voices, "don't kill the fawn; it belongs to us."

"Where do the voices come from?" cried the King in surprise.

"There are some hermits standing among the trees, Sire, who seem to be screening the antelope."

"Stop the chariot, then."

As the horses came to a dead stop, three hermits stepped forward, and begged the King to stay his hand from harming a little animal, whose body was like a heap of tender flowers. Dushyanta agreed at once and received a warm blessing from the grateful ascetics. They

invited him to their hermitage on the banks of the river Malini.

"Our founder and head," said they, "is the great sage, Kanwa, who is a descendant of Kasyapa the father of the smaller gods. Round his sacred Asrama (hermitage) are gardens and groves, where our pet animals live, and where we perform our sacrifices and carry out our penances. Some of our hermits, oh King, are very holy men; and, when you see them, you will be proud that you are their guardian soverign, to whom they look for protection from their enemies."

"In the holy Kanwa at home?" asked, Dushyanta.

"No, sire. He has gone on a pilgrimage to the sacred Soma-Thirtha in the West of India, so that he may avert some calamity, which seems to threaten his daughter, Sakuntala. But she has been commissioned by him to entertain his guests in his absence. She will be very pleased, if your Majesty will deign to visit her. In the meanwhile we go to collect wood for our daily sacrifice."

The King went on, seeing the signs of hermit-life on all sides. Under the trees were many broods of young parrots picking up the grains of rice scattered for their benefit. On smooth fresh cut lawns, grazed the fawns. So accustomed to gentle humanity were they, that they looked up without fear at the King's approach. Round the roots of the trees, deep trenches held collected rain-water, the clear ripples of which trembled in the breezes and sparkled in the checkered sunlight. On the branches dripping vests made of bark were drying. The curling smoke from burnt sacrifices wreathed upwards among the tender leafage. All was so peaceful and serene and natural that Dushyanta felt constrained to alight from his chariot; and, putting off his kingly ornaments and weapons, he walked on alone in humble attire. As he entered the hermitage, he felt a throbbing in his right arm and wondered at such an omen of happy love in such a place. Suddenly, he heard women's voices, and hiding himself behind some trees, saw three maidens of the hermitage coming in with water-pots to attend to the plants. They were

Sakuntala, the daughter of Kanwa, and her two companions, Anasuya and Priyamvada.

"Sakuntala," said Anasuya, "father Kanwa seems to care more for the plants of the hermitage than for you. You are as delicate as a fresh-blown flower, and yet he asks you to undertake the laborious task of watering their roots."

"I do not regard this task as a labour, Anasuya," answered Sakuntala. "I regard it as a pleasure, for I love the plants, as if they were my sisters. Look at that Kesara-tree, how it seems to call to me with its waving shoots, which are like slender fingers. I must go to it."

"As you stand by it, Sakuntala," said Priyamvada, "you appear like a lovely creeper winding round it."

"What pretty things you say, Priyamvada; your name suits you well. You are indeed 'The speaker of sweet speeches.'"

"Look, Sakuntala, here is the jasmine plant, which you once named 'The moon-light of the grove' and styled the self-chosen

bride of the mango-tree. Do you remember ?"

"I do. How delightful they look, entwined like that, don't they ? The white blossoms of the jasmine are like the fresh flowers of a bride, as they nestle among the tender shoots of the mango."

The maidens carried on their artless conversation, oblivious of the presence of a stranger and the King listened entranced.

"How graceful do these maidens look," he said to himself. "We cannot find such freshness in our palaces. Truly, woodland plants outshine garden flowers. And, who is this most beautiful maiden ? They call her Sakuntala. Can she be indeed the daughter of the hermit ? How wrong he is to destine such a maiden to an ascetic life ! He is attempting an impossible task, just as if he were trying with the soft edge of a lotus leaf to cut the hard wood of the *Sami Tree*. How beautiful she looks in her simple surroundings ! Her dress of bark, though rough and uncouth, seems to set off her wonderful grace; for,

everything is an ornament to really lovely persons.

"I wish I could make her my bride. But, how can I hope to marry her, if she belongs to the hermit stock. A king is not allowed to mate with an anchorite. And yet my heart whispers to me that she is of a different caste, and so is free to wed a Kshatriya king. And what the heart of a good man says is usually true. I will go to them, and ask them who she really is".

As he was stepping forward, a diversion occurred. A bee began to hum round Sakuntala's head and persistently followed her about, as she moved from place to place trying to throw off its pursuit. The King stood by, admiring the charm of her flurry, as her innocent eyes glanced about in unaccustomed furtive glances, while the bee circled round her, as if eager to murmur tender secrets in her ear, or sip the sweetness from her fresh lips, or steal the brightness from her sparkling eyes.

"Help, help," cried Sakuntala, "save me from this troublesome bee".

"You must call to Dushyanta for help, for these groves are under his special care," laughed her companions, all unconscious of their eaves-dropper. "This is an excellent opportunity for me to show myself," thought the King, as he hastily came forward, and cried "Who dares to frighten the gentle maidens of this hermitage, while the descendant of Puru rules the earth ?"

Sakuntala stood back in confusion, but her bold friends held their ground, and welcomed the intruder as a distinguished guest. His gentle and courteous manner and polite conversation emboldened them to ask him who he was. Unwilling to disclose his real identity, he told them that he was the agent of King Dushyanta in legal and religious matters, and so had been sent to the sacred hermitage to see if the hermits were leading a tranquil and happy life.

As she gazed at the stranger, Sakuntala's young heart, which had from the beginning felt drawn to him, began to beat in great throbs, and emotions hitherto unknown to her began to make themselves felt. Dush-

yanta, on his part, enquired how a girl like Sakuntala could be the daughter of the ascetic Kanwa. Thereupon, he was told the real story of the maiden.

The great King Viswamitra, not satisfied with the regal glory he had earned, had wished to raise himself to the rank of a Brahmin by long and severe penance on the banks of the Godavari. His austerity and asceticism had risen to such a height that the smaller gods had been filled with alarm and envy. They had sent the lovely nymph, Menaka, to disturb his meditations; and she had succeeded only too well in drawing his attentions to her. A daughter had been born to her and, disowned by both father and mother, had been left in the forest to die. But the *Sakunthas* or birds had taken pity on the sufferings of the poor little baby and had taken care of her. Hence her name Sakuntala, given her by the sage Kanwa, who had found her in the forest and had brought her up as his own daughter.

"I now see" said the King, "how such wonderful beauty came to your friend. She

is really of divine origin. The lightning does not flash from the earth, but from the sky. But has she bound herself by a vow of solitude for the whole of her life? Does she wish for ever to live with her fawns, who look upon her with such eyes of sisterly affection?"

"Nay, Sire!" said Priyamvada. "She is practising religious duties, it is true, but only for a time, for her foster-father wishes to give her away in marriage to a husband worthy of her."

At this information, the King's heart beat high with hope, and Sakuntala, overpowered by shyness, moved away, on the pretext of reporting the impertinence of her attendants to Gautami, the venerable matron of the hermitage. But the mischievous girls caught hold of her and brought her back, because, they said, she had not finished her duty of watering the plants. The distraught maiden toiled at her task. Her slim arms and shoulders drooped under the weight of the water-jug; her breast heaved with her overtaxed breath; her hair fell loose and hung in curly rings round the Sirisha blossoms in her ear, perspiration

stood in pearly drops on her face. The king stood for a while enjoying the charming sight she presented; then he offered his ring to the maids, begging them in return to release their friend from her obligation. The girls read with surprise the name "Dushyanta" on the jewel; but he told them that it was only his seal of office as the King's agent.

At that moment a great commotion was heard inside the hermitage. Voices began to cry that King Dushyanta was coming by on one of his hunting expeditions.

"Oh," said the King laughing, "there is no help for it now. I am betrayed. My people seem to have invaded this holy retreat, and I must go and meet them."

"Noble Sire," said Priyamvada, taken aback by the identity of the distinguished visitor, "we have not treated our noble guest with due hospitality, and so we hardly dare to hope that your Majesty will pay us a second visit."

"Do not think so lightly of yourselves. The mere sight of your sweet faces is enough to

make me wish to come here again. I have no longer any desire to return to the city, but shall encamp with my attendants somewhere near this hermitage."

"Will you allow us to go to our cottage now? We are afraid of being attacked by the wild animals, which have been scared by your hunters."

"Go, gentle maidens, and I shall make it my task to see that no harm is done in these holy precincts. I shall tell my followers that, if they rouse the spirit of the hermitage to anger, it will burn them with wild flame, just as the cool crystal of a glass lens is suddenly excited to burning heat by the touch of the sun on its polished surface."

The King was as good as his word. He disbanded the expedition and dismissed all his attendants, with the exception of the Court jester, Mathavya, who was his great friend. Much to the joy of the latter, who was very tired, Dushyanta decided to give up the chase, and was content to sit quietly in lonely corners of the hermitage. But Mathavya was not allowed to rest even there in peace, for his

royal friend was never tired of talking to him of the beauty of the hermit-girl, Sakuntala, who was, he said, "the brightest ornament of those hallowed groves."

Mathavya tried to ridicule him out of his fancy, which he said was like the appetite of a man for sour tamarinds, after being surfeited with sweet dates. But the King was in no wise abashed.

"The great God" he said, "wishing to create a form, whose faultless proportions should excel the choicest wonders of this world, picked out the best parts from all lovely things and made them into one perfect and ideal being, who is none other than my Sakuntala. She is the freshest of fragrant flowers, the tenderest of young buds, the purest of priceless waters, the sweetest drop of golden honey."

Mathavya, carried away by the King's eloquence, tried to devise an excuse, by which his friend could again enter the hermitage in the absence of its holy head. Just then, as luck would have it, two young hermits were ushered in, craving audience with the King. They

were struck with admiration at the noble appearance of Dushyanta, his Majesty, of kingliness, united with the humility and holiness of a saint, which won for him later, the title of 'Rajarshi'; or 'Imperial Sage'.

They had come to invite the King to stay in the Ashram for their protection, during the absence of their head Kanwa.

"Oh King," they cried, "your powerful arm, which is like the iron bar across a castle gateway, is the single support of the whole earth even to its boundaries of dark green waters. It is no wonder that the gods, helped by you in their fierce warfare against the demons, should pay as much tribute to your name as to the name of Indra, the God of Heaven."

"Tell me why you have come here," said the King.

"As our great superior, the sage Kanwa, is away, evil demons are spoiling our religious rites. We beg you, therefore, to deign to live in our hermitage for a few days, so as to vanquish our enemies."

"I am honoured by your invitation, and shall follow you immediately," answered the King, very pleased with this opportunity of being near Sakuntala.

But just then a messenger arrived from his capital, informing him that the Queen-Mother, who intended in four days to celebrate a ceremony for the blessing of her son, awaited his arrival. The King did not know what to do; On the one hand, there was his duty to the holy hermits; on the other, his obedience to his mother's command. He felt like a stream, which, impeded by rocks, forms two swirling currents. Eventually, he arrived at the decision to send back Mathavya, who was much loved by the Queen-Mother, to take his place in the ceremonial. Mathavya, of course, accepted the commission with great pleasure. Before he left, Dushyanta, afraid that his friend would blab to the Queen about his love for Sakuntala, assured him that he was really not in earnest about her.

The very presence of the King frightened the evil demons, who stopped molesting the hermits. Dushyanta, having nothing further

to do in the holy place, felt his love for Sakuntala grow by leaps and bounds. So, not knowing what to do, he often walked about the garden, trying to trace the course of Sakuntala's wanderings there. At last, one day, he saw her well-known footsteps in the sand, and following them, he came to a thin screen of branches. Peeping through it, he saw Sakuntala reclining on a rock, strewn with flowers; she seemed to be ill, for her maids were fanning her and were whispering anxiously to each other about her.

The King listened and heard them asking her why she was so thin and sad. After much hesitation, she confessed to them that ever since the coming of the King, her heart had turned towards him, and that all her energy had deserted her. Artlessly, like the child she was, she asked them to find some means for her to find favour with the King. The maidens were quite pleased that she had fixed her love on such a man as Dushyanta, who was the illustrious gem of Puru's line. They were not much astonished at what had happened, for, does not the noblest river run

to the ocean, and does not the lovely Madhavi creeper always twine naturally round the stalwart Mango? They recalled how tenderly the King had looked at Sakuntala, and how thin and fevered he now looked, as if he also was sleepless and pining. He must be in love with their friend. So, they suggested that she should write an anonymous love-letter, which they would hide in a flower and drop in his path. Sakuntala hesitated to carry out the plan; for, simple-hearted as she was, and not knowing the power of her own beauty, she was afraid that her appeal might be refused. The maids, however, reassured her, and brought her a smooth lotus-leaf on which she wrote with her nail a verse, revealing the love that burnt her day and night for a person, whose secret feeling towards her she did not know. The listening King, delighted by this artless prattle, which told him that his love was returned, now came forward and sat down near Sakuntala. The maids, seeing how he loved their friend, disclosed to him the secret of Sakuntala's illness and begged him to help her, as it was the duty of a ruler to aid all

his subjects. The King assured them that there were two things alone which he valued in the world, his sea-girt kingdom and the lovely maid Sakuntala. Satisfied with his words, Priyamvada and Anasuya left Sakuntala alone with Dushyanta. That sweet and simple girl, even while confessing her love, would not allow the King to come near her or touch her, for she was afraid of incurring the displeasure of her guardian. In the absence of Kanwa, she had no right to choose her husband. Heeding not his pleadings, she turned aside from him, even though her heart craved for his love. When the old matron, Gautami, came to look for her, she bade the King conceal himself and went away from the garden, with many a regretful glance backward.

Eventually, however, the persuasions of the King and her companions prevailed on the gentle Sakuntala, and she was united to Dushyanta by the Gandharva form of marriage, which, in use among the nymphs of Indra's heaven, allowed mere mutual agreement as a basis for legal marriage, even without consent from relatives and without reli-

gious observances. But it was not long before Dushyanta had to return to his kingdom. He left his wife with many regrets, promising to send for her as soon as possible.

It became the habit for the bereft girl to sit in her cottage, motionless as a statue, her mind drowned in dreams of her absent husband. Her companions did not feel very happy about her for two reasons: one was that they were not quite sure of Dushyanta, and were afraid that the attractions of his court might make him forget Sakuntala; the other was that they did not know whether Kanwa would approve of the secret marriage of his adopted daughter. One day, wishing to propitiate the guardian deity of Sakuntala, they went into the garden, to gather flowers for the sacrificial offerings.

Suddenly, a voice outside startled them. It was the voice of a very impatient and angry man.

"Hollo!" he cried, "is no one there? I have been waiting here and calling, and there is no one to heed me. Is this the way to treat a guest, especially a hermit like myself, who has won great merit by penance and is worthy

of all respect? I know the young maid, Sakuntala, is inside; but she is foolish and rash and absorbed in love. How does she dare disregard the sacred duties of hospitality? How dare she be absent-minded when I am here? For this, I will curse her, and the curse will be this: the man of whom she is dreaming will completely forget her, and, will disown her, in spite of all efforts to make him remember the past."

The petrified maids had not been able to recover from their terror and summon strength to run to the rescue, in time to prevent the curse from being pronounced. They knew that it was the bad-tempered sage, Durvasa, who had said it; and that his curse was irrevocable. But still they made a gallant effort to mollify his wrath. Priyamvada threw herself at his feet and begged him to be merciful, explaining that what had angered him was but the first offence of a young girl, who did not know what was due to him. Durvasa, in reply, said that he could not retract his curse, but could shorten the duration of it. It would cease to act, as soon as a sign of recognition was given to Dushyanta.

Now a ring, on which his name was engraved, had been given to Sakuntala by Dushyanta as a parting gift and a token of remembrance. The girl had it safe on her finger; and so her friends were afraid no more of the sage's curse. They made up their minds to keep the whole matter a secret from her, because she was too delicate to bear much trouble. "Who," they said, "would water a tender jasmine plant with hot water"?

Months passed and still Dushyanta did not send for his bride. Had he forgotten her? Sakuntala's friends began to be afraid that Durvasa's curse had already begun to take effect. Should they send him the ring of recognition to waken his remembrance? But whom could they send it by, and how could they do it without the knowledge of Kanwa? He had just returned from his pilgrimage, and the girls trembled with anxiety for their friend, for she was expecting to become a mother. What would happen to her?

But their fears were not justified. One morning, as the blushing sun was beginning to shed his first rays on the earth, while the moon

was sinking to rest behind the Western hills, leaving his beloved night-lotuses to close their blooms in sorrow at his departure, the great sage entered the holy place of the sacred fire, and heard a divine voice blessing the unborn son of Dushyanta and Sakuntala. Quick to guess what had happened, he went on with the sacrifice; and, to his great joy, saw that the officiating priest, in spite of the thick smoke before him, had dropped his offering in the very centre of the fire. This was a very auspicious omen, and he straightway went to his daughter and offered her his congratulations. She was not to be an object of shame and pity, but the happy wife of a great king, and the prospective mother of a blessed son. That very day he would send her to join her husband at Hasthinapur, the ancient Delhi, the capital of Dushyanta's kingdom, under the escort of two or three hermits and the old matron Gautami. Priyamvada and Anasuya, though very sad at losing their friend, yet loved her so truly that they rejoiced at her happiness. They prepared the bridal array for Sakuntala. One of them had put by for

this very purpose a beautiful garland of auspicious *kesara* flowers, which were hard to procure. They now prepared sweet unguents and fragrant perfumes and gathered blades of sacred grass for the offerings. They dressed their friend in garments suitable for a queen, which, apparently presented to her by the wood-nymphs, had been found in a most miraculous manner, hanging on the boughs of a forest tree; —a robe of linen tissue, white and spotless as a moon-beam, "a mystic pledge of bridal happiness;" and rare and costly ornaments shining among the leaves and excelling the opening buds in beauty. Not knowing how quite to arrange such magnificent apparel, the maids went to paintings for inspiration, and eventually turned out their dear mistress like a beautiful picture. Wedding gifts and offerings were showered on her, and blessings were poured on her head.

"May you be greatly honoured by our Lord and receive the title of chief Queen", cried one holy woman; while another chanted, "*May you be the mother of a hero;*" and yet another said:

"May you be received as a happy wife into your husband's house and become the partner of his royal fortunes, as the wood-nymphs by their costly presents have already prophesied."

After that, Sakuntala had to bid farewell to the beloved hermitage, under whose shadow she had passed the happy years of her childhood and girlhood. All nature seemed to sympathise with her grief; for the deer forgot to graze, the dancing peacock stood motionless, and the very trees shed their pale leaves like tears. She bowed to the plants, whose thirsty roots she had been always careful to water before she quenched her own thirst; whose blossoms she had always spared, even though she would have loved to put them in her hair, and the glory of whose opening buds she had always watched over, even as a mother watches over her young ones. In return, to the surprise of everyone, invisible voices from the guardian-deities of the trees chanted blessings over her.

Sakuntala bade a special adieu to her pet jasmine plant, which she had christened, "the moonlight of the grove."

"My beautiful jasmine," she wept, "whom I have loved as a sister, I pray you, turn your arms aside for a moment from the mango tree, and cling to me, who am going far away and may never see you again."

"Daughter," cried Kanwa. "Do not weep. Thy sweetness shall cling as confidingly round the sturdy strength of thy husband, whom thou hast chosen for thyself, as the creeper of the jasmine here clings to the strong mango. Leave thy jasmine to the tree's protection, as I am leaving you to your lord. Go now, my daughter, in peace."

But, as Sakuntala turned to go, something pulled at her dress. Turning round, she found that it was her pet fawn, which, after the death of its mother, she had nursed and brought up. She had looked after it with a mother's tenderness, feeding it with grains of rice and healing its wounds, and petting it; and now it refused to leave her.

"My poor little one," cried the weeping girl, "how can you ask to follow an ungrateful wretch like myself, who does not hesitate

to desert her friends? Go to my father and be a daughter to him. I must go."

Kanwa accompanied Sakuntala, as far as the edge of a lake, and then prepared to leave her, for the sacred rule was that a departing guest should be accompanied only as far as the margin of the first stream. First, he blessed her:

"May you be as greatly loved, and honoured by your lord as Sarmista was by Yayati; and, as she bore him the great Puru, may you have a son to whom the whole world will bow."

Then, he sent a message to King Dushyanta, begging him, in virtue of his own honourable rank, and remembering the holy character of the place she came from, to receive his wife honourably and to cherish her as his Queen. Finally, he gave his parting advice to his daughter, even as Polonius in Shakespeare's HAMLET advised Ophelia:

"Honour and respect thy betters", he said, "and those who are placed above you. Do not be jealous of those, who share your husband's love. But try and be a loving friend to them. Be patient and submit to your

husband, even though he may be harsh to you. Be considerate, kind and courteous to all those placed under you. Do not indulge in pleasure ; and do not be proud of your position. Be true to yourself and to me, who have brought you up. Sometimes, life may be rugged and rough and uphill and full of troubles; but press boldly on and leave the rest to God. In this way, you will prove a blessing to your husband's house, and not a curse."

Sakuntala bowed before him:

"How can I live in a foreign land, father?" she asked. "Removed from your protecting care, I shall be like a branch of the sandalwood tree torn from its home in the Western mountains."

"Your fears are groundless," answered the sage. "When your lord raises you to the rank of his Queen, your time will soon be occupied with the cares of your royal court; and, when your son comes, your heart will be filled with new delight: and you will forget the sorrow of parting that now grieves your gentle soul."

"My beloved father, you also must not sorrow too much over our parting. You are weak from penance and must not be too much enfeebled by grief."

"How can I, my child, forget my bereavement, when, day by day, I see around me the plants, which your loving care and tender hands have reared? Who will look after them, when you are gone?"

"I leave them to my two dear companions as a parting gift."

"And to whom will you leave us, dearest?" wept the maids, "who will look after us in your absence? Shall we ever dress you, or tend you again?"

"Father," asked Sakuntala turning to her father "cannot I take my friends with me?"

"No, my child; it would not be right for them to go to a public place like the court of your husband. They also must, in good time, be given suitable husbands."

Then, he turned to the weeping maids. "For shame, girls," he gently chided them. "Do not weep on this most auspicious

moment. Is this the way to cheer your friend when she is sad?"

"Dear Sakuntala," they whispered as they embraced her in farewell, "If the King is in any way slow in recognising you, do not forget to show him your ring of remembrance."

"The very thought of repudiation makes me tremble."

"There is really no cause for fear, dear one. Farewell, and may God bless you."

"When shall I ever see this holy ground again?" sighed Sakuntala as she took her last look around.

"I shall tell you, my daughter. When you and your lord have spent a long and happy life together as sovereigns of your prosperous and well-protected land, and when you have found a suitable bride for your heroic son, then your aged husband will peacefully resign to him the care of the state he had so long and so faithfully cherished. Then, weary of the world and its joys and sorrows, both of you shall come here to your old home and live in calm and blessed seclusion, till it is time for

your pure spirits to depart to the house of the gods. So now, my daughter, may you have a prosperous journey."

As Sakuntala went away, the aged man sighed and yet was surprised to feel his mind somewhat relieved. He was glad indeed, he said to himself, to have settled his Sakuntala so happily.

> "A daughter is a loan—a precious jewel,
> Lent to a parent till her husband claims her.
> And now that to her rightful lord and master
> I have delivered her, my burdened soul
> Is lightened, and I seem to breathe more freely."

But, Sakuntala's fears were not groundless for, already the curse of the sage Durvasa had begun to take effect. Just before the deputation from the sage Kanwa arrived, King Dushyanta felt a wave of haunting sadness stealing over him, as if he was yearning for some long-forgotten object of affection.

"It is a common and vain thought," he said to his chamberlain, "that, once the object of ambition is gained, rest can be enjoyed. But, with success comes the anxious fear of loss and the constant care of protection. Especially hard is the lot of a king, who has for ever to be vigilant for his subjects."

"Just as the flaming sun has, day after day, to pursue his unwearied course, without halting to rest even for a moment", said the other man; "just as the swift wind has ever to rush forwards on its path through boundless space; just as the king of serpents has everlastingly to support the heavy earth on his thousand heads; so a king has to toil unrestingly for the welfare of his subjects; for his people are his children, and, like a good father, he supplies their wants. He can take his rest only, when, like the elephant chief, he has led his flock from the fierce heat of the sun into grassy valleys and cool shades".

When the hermits were announced, the King received them with due respect in the chamber of the sacred fire. To their ascetic minds, fed hitherto on soli-

tude, the crowds in the town had looked as bewildering as the frantic inhabitants of a burning house would look to a passer-by. The people had appeared unclean and impure to them, and unawakened from sin and slavishly bound by pleasure. But, as they looked on the gracious King, whom his people loved as a guardian, a faithful friend and a loving relative, they acknowledged his majestic dignity and his beneficent rule, under which no evil would be allowed to exist. The King wondered what message they could bring him, whether the peace of their hermitage had been disturbed by evil-doers, or whether his sins had been the cause of a withering blight on their crops. The hermits told him that they had not come as petitioners, for there was no occasion to question his charity.

"The tallest trees," they said, "stand humbly, so that their fruit may be gathered; the water-filled clouds hang low in the sky, so that their rain may refresh the earth. Riches never make good people proud; and so we have full confidence in your royal generosity."

The King, while acknowledging their kindness, wondered at Sakuntala, as she stood among the hermits, like a fresh bud among withered leaves, her long veil hiding her face, yet revealing the grace of her perfect form. She, poor girl, felt a twitching in her right eyelid and felt that some evil was about to happen to her. Her heart throbbed with anxiety, which she tried to allay by recalling the King's affection for her in the hermitage. But soon her fears were justified.

"The sage Kanwa", said the hermits, "bade us say that he is pleased to give his sanction to the marriage which your Majesty privately contracted with his daughter. You are the noblest and most illustrious of men; Sakuntala is 'virtue herself in human form revealed.' This most suitable match, therefore, has been made by the great God, Brahma himself. As Sakuntala soon expects to be the mother of your child, we ask you to receive her into your palace so that all the necessary ceremonies may be performed."

"What strange message is this?" asked the King.

"What!" cried the hermit, while Sakuntala shuddered with anguish. "Do you hesitate to receive her? Then, your Majesty must have lost your affection for her. But, oh King, you know that a wife, who lives apart from her husband, however chaste and prudent she may be, is yet suspected by the evil world. Therefore, though you love her not, you are asked by her relatives to let her stay in your palace."

"But, this lady is not my wife. I have never seen her before", exclaimed Dushyanta; and he persisted in this declaration through all the remonstrances of the hermits, and even when they reminded him that he was insulting the generosity of Kanwa by his repudiation of his daughter. When Sakuntala, at the bidding of Gautami, unveiled herself, though struck by her wondrous beauty, he turned his eyes from her, because with his strong sense of justice and honour, he knew it was not right to look on another man's wife. At last, Sakuntala was asked to plead for herself.

"Noble son of Puru," begged the girl, "do not call our marriage in question, and do not betray an innocent girl, who believed in your solemnly-plighted vow."

"What evil spirit possesses this lady," cried the King, stopping his ears, "that she should, in this manner, try to spoil my good name, as a rushing torrent, overflowing its narrowed bed, tries to throw down the trees on its banks?"

"If you believe me to be the wife of another, some cloud must be dimming your memory. But, I can easily prove my words by this, token."

She felt for her ring, but could not find it, Gautami guessed that it must have slipped off her finger when bathing in a forest pool. As Sakuntala stood there, drowned in anguish and shame, the King looked round with a smile.

"Who can fathom the depth of a woman's invention?", he asked.

"Say rather", cried Sakuntala growing bold in her misery, "who can understand the power of fate? Let me remind you of another

thing. When we were sitting one day in a jasmine bower, you tipped some water from a lotus blossom into the hollow of your hand. Just then, my little fawn came towards us ; and, before drinking yourself, you offered the water to her. But, she would not take it from the hand of a stranger. However, when I gave the water from my own hand, she drank it, and you smiled, my lord, and said: 'every creature naturally trusts his own kind. As you are both dwellers in the same forest, this fawn trusts you.'!"

"Such fine words of falsehood," said the King, "may tempt a wicked man to stray but not me."

"This lady, oh prince", said Gautami "was nurtured in a hermitage, and has never learned to deceive."

"Even among the brute beasts, oh mother, the females are instinctively cunning; how much more then among intelligent human beings? Have you not heard that the *kokil* cunningly lays its eggs in the nests of other birds, so that she may be free to enjoy herself?"

"You are a dishonourable man," cried Sakuntala. "and you naturally judge by your own standards. Your cloak of virtue hides the mean deceit of your heart, as sometimes sweet flowers conceal the mouth of a deep pit. Your heart is full of poison; yet your mouth drops honey. My innocence in trusting a prince of the Puru race has been my undoing."

The King marvelled inwardly at her genuine wrath, which made him doubt for the first time whether he was in the right. But outwardly he looked still unbelieving:

"A prince of Puru's race", he said calmly, "will never bring dishonour on others. My own character is well-known to the world".

At this, the hermits grew impatient and moved away, leaving Sakuntala behind. She followed them with tears and entreaties; but, they would have nothing to do with her.

"How can your father receive you, if you are, what the King says you are, a wicked woman? But, if you are a true and pure wife, your duty is to stay cheerfully in your

husband's house, even though he may degrade you to the rank of a servant."

"Do not try to tempt me, and do not deceive the poor lady", argued the King. "As the moon at night is the lord of his flowers, and the sun in the morning the delight of his lotuses, so every one must be content with his own. I am master of myself and will not look at another man's wife. Tell me what I should do. I leave you to decide for yourself which of the two evils, I shall choose; am I to think that some darkness has clouded my mind, and led me to disown my wedded wife? Or, knowing that she has spoken untrue words, am I to take her and thus prove myself a wicked man, who would defile another's wife?"

Then, the King's priest, who had all along been present as a silent spectator of this most harrowing scene, chimed in:

"Sire, you must take a middle course. I will take the lady into my own house till her child is born. Now, it has been predicted that your first-born son will be the emperor of the world. If the son of the hermit's daughter shows the natural mark of empire

in the palm of his hand, you must admit her as your own wedded wife, whom by some mischance you have forgotten. If not, you must quickly send her back to her father."

The King agreed to this reasonable proposal, and Sakuntala followed the priest, weeping for her cruel fate and praying the earth to open and swallow her. The hermits left her and went away. Suddenly, a miracle happened. A resplendent shape descended from the sky and carried her away on high. This was none other than the heavenly nymph, Menaka, who, in spite of her abandonment of her babe in the forest, had never really lost sight of her, but had watched her anguish with a mother's pity, till it could no longer be borne.

When the King was told of this strange happening, he was amazed, but at the same time glad that such a sign of heavenly favour had been shown to a poor woman, who seemed so innocent, but who made such a preposterous claim.

Some time passed, and then a strange thing happened. A poor fisherman was caught by the police, trying to sell in the market a valu-

able ring with the King's seal on it. He defended himself with the statement that he had not stolen the ring, but had found it inside a large carp which he had hooked. The ring was taken to the King, who, as soon as he saw it, showed much agitation, though usually he was a man of strong self-control. He presented the fisherman with a large sum of money and sent him away happy. But, his own behaviour from that moment changed; for the whole story of his secret marriage with Sakuntala came back to his memory; and he was filled with the most bitter remorse at his cruel treatment of his beloved wife. No longer gay and irresponsible, he gave up all his pleasures, and even neglected the duties of his state. Sleepless and exhausted with sorrow, he lost all his manly energy, and became thin and emaciated. He even forbade the celebration of the annual spring festival to the god of love; and all nature drooped and seemed to sympathise with his mood.

"Mathavya," asked the King to his jester, as one day they sadly ensconced themselves in a jasmine bower, "how is it you never

spoke to me of Sakuntala, after I left her? I know you were not present at the time I disowned her; but you had been made aware of the whole story of my love. How is it you did not try to awaken my memory?"

"Sire," said Mathavya, "do you not remember telling me that you were not in real earnest about the hermit's daughter, but were only playing with her? I was stupid enough to believe you."

"I can never forget the last long look of reproach she threw at me, which still rankles in my heart like a poisoned arrow. What do you think has happened to her?"

"It was a heavenly being, who carried her off?"

"Yes, it was said that Sakuntala was the daughter of the nymph Menaka. Perhaps her mother had taken her to heaven."

"In that case you will be certain to see her soon, for no mother can endure such misery as Sakuntla must be suffering now. Is not the very discovery of the ring a proof that what has been lost may again be found? When was it you gave her the ring, my lord?"

"When I left her weeping at my going away, I placed the ring on her finger and told her to repeat every day one letter of the name engraved on it; and promised her that before the whole name was pronounced, I would send my minister to fetch her. But alas, fool that I was, I forgot my promise."

"See, sire," said Mathavya as a maid approached with a picture in her hand. "Here is a portrait of the Queen Sakuntala and her maids drawn by your own hand, which you ordered to be brought to you. You have done excellently, my friend. The three figures are almost life-like. But, which of them is Sakuntala?"

"I have not really done justice to her angelic loveliness; but, cannot you guess which is Sakuntala?"

"It must be the one who is leaning rather wearily on the mango tree, with her pretty arms gracefully stretched out, to ease them from the weight of the water-pots, her face flushed with the heat, and her hair hanging in damp curls and loose tresses about her neck and shoulders."

"I congratulate you, friend, on your intelligence. But I have not yet finished the picture. Bring me the brush. I wish to put in a few more touches. Here is the calm water of the Malini river, with a pair of swans at its edge; beyond that, is the range of hills next to the Himalayas, where herds of deer are wandering about; in the foreground, are the spreading branches of large trees, upon which hang vestments of bark, and below which a tender doe stands leaning against a black antelope. And see, I have forgotten the Sirisha blossoms behind her ears, which should droop towards her neck, and the garland of lotus-fibres which should rest like a beam of the autumn moon on her bosom."

"Why does she hold her fingers to her lips, as if warding off something from them? Oh! I see, a bee is hovering round her, and is trying to steal honey from the rose-bud of her mouth."

"A bee! drive it off. How dare it touch the lips of my beloved?"

"Sire, Sire, it is only a painted bee."

"Painted! ah, so it is. Oh, Mathavya, why did you wake me from my trance of love. It is always like this. I cannot dream of her, for I cannot sleep. But, when I try to bring her painted image to life, I always find that it is only a picture."

There had been an unseen listener to the whole conversation. The nymph Menaka, anxious to reconcile her daughter to her husband, had sent a friend of hers, called Sanumathi, to enter the King's palace, and find out how Dushyanta felt towards his lost wife. Sanumathi, making herself invisible, saw the King's grief and was very pleased at this proof of his affection. She pitied him and considered that he had, by his remorse, made ample amends for his cruel behaviour towards Sakuntala. His gallant appearance, in spite of his distraught condition, pleased her. "His beauty," she said to herself, "seems to shine through sorrow, just as a priceless gem gains lustre, when the polisher rubs off the crust that covers it. I can well understand why Sakuntala should pine after such a man, even after being scornfully rejected by him."

She was still more pleased when the King gave a proof that his sorrow had, instead of embittering his soul, only increased the inherent beauty of his character. Information was brought to him that a rich merchant had lost his life in a ship-wreck, and, as he was childless, his vast property had been by law forfeited to the King, even though one of his wives was expecting a child. Dushyanta was surprised at such injustice, and decreed that thenceforward, not only should an unborn child have a title to his dead father's property, but that also every bereaved subject of the state should become the special care of the King, who would supply the place of the dead relative. This, however, it was pointed out to him, could not prevent the property of rich men, who had no lineal descendants, from passing to strangers at their death. The King was specially struck by this fact, which seemed to apply to his own case; and he sorrowed bitterly for the folly, which had rejected the son expected by his lawful wife. Sanumathi, the invisible nymph, upon this nearly betrayed herself to the King, so that

she might put an end to his misery by the welcome news that his Sakuntala was alive and safe. But, recalling the promise of the gods that matters would soon end happily for her friend, she repented the impulse, and, ascending into the sky in her chariot, disappeared.

At that moment, a diversion occurred. Mathavya had slipped away some time before into the interior of the garden. Now, his voice was heard calling for help, and Dushyanta rushed to rescue him. What was his surprise to see standing before him none other than Mathali, the charioteer of the God Indra, with Mathavya in his clutch. Laughing at the terror and chagrin of the jester, the divine charioteer released him, saying that he had attacked him only to rouse the exhausted energies of the sorrow-stricken King.

"Now, noble King" he said, " I shall give you my master's message. A race of gigantic demons, descended from the evil Kalanemi, and possessing each a hundred arms and heads, have risen against the gods, and Indra does you the honour of appointing you the leader

of his armies. He requests you to come to heaven and vanquish the giant host, even as the sun allows the pale moon to conquer darkness."

Mightily pleased at this commission, King Dushyanta committed the care of his kingdom to Pisuna, his Minister, and ascended to heaven in Indra's car.

The most complete success followed the warfare of Dushyanta against the demons. Mightily pleased with him, the gods showered rewards upon his embarrassed head. Indra himself threw a garland of the ever-blooming Mandara flowers round his shoulders, and enthroned him by his side to the utter disgust of his own son. He was styled the second saviour of heaven, and the celestial beings of the heavenly spheres sang hymns of praise in honour of him, and wrote the story of his victory in scrolls made of the leaves of everliving trees. Then with the consent of Indra, Dushyanta turned back to his kingdom. *En route*, he was given the right to roam through the starry worlds He was taken by Mathali along the path

of the Wind, which, blowing round the Great Bear with its seven stars, had directed the first course of the heavenly Ganges along the Mandakini or "the Milky Way" of the stars. He went along the road, on which had rested the sacred foot of God Vishnu, when, in taking by trickery the power from the Demon Bali, he had craved the boon of as much land as could be covered in three steps, and had in his second stride covered the whole of the heavens. Then they descended.

The King was enchanted by the beauty of the prospect opened before him, as they rushed through the air towards the earth, which seemed hurled upward by some mysterious agency.

" What is that mountain," he asked, " with one foot in the Western Ocean, and the other in the Eastern, which seems to stream with gold, as the setting sun illumines it ? "

" It is called the Golden Peak, and is the dwelling place of Kubera, the God of wealth. In this place, the best penance in the world is performed. Here, the hermit, Kasyapa, grand-son of Brahma and the father of Indra and the

smaller gods and the demons, lives with his wife, the venerable Adithi, and practises penance for the salvation of human beings."

Upon hearing this, Dushyanta desired to alight at the Golden Peak and pay his respects to the great hermit. The divine chariot came to a halt gently and noiselessly, without raising any dust, and then moved lightly along the ground, with a motion quite different from that of earthly cars. At the entrance of the hermitage, they saw an anchorite standing motionless, facing the sun, his body half-hidden by an ant-heap, which had gathered round him, a withered creeper round his neck, an ugly snake-skin on his shoulders, and his hair so matted and entangled that birds had built their nests in it. The King felt around him an atmosphere of delightful peace, as if he were bathing in a pool of ambrosia. The air was so balmy, as it blew from the groves of paradise under the grateful shadow of ever-living trees, that no other food was needed besides it; fountains of crystal water sparkled with the golden pollen of heavenly lilies; jewelled slabs of marble invited such rapt

meditation that even the presence of celestial nymphs would be powerless to tempt away holy thoughts.

As the king stood awaiting the leisure of Kasyapa, he felt a throbbing in his right arm, fore-telling a happy union with a beloved woman. Suddenly, he heard women's voices scolding a naughty child. Then he saw a young boy teasing an angry lioness and tearing a young cub from its fierce clutch. The child, who was addressed as Sarvadamana, " the all-taming one", proceeded to play with the young lion, in spite of the remonstrances of his attendants. The King's sad heart warmed towards the high-spirited boy, as if he were his own son. He admired the child's bravery, which was like a spark beneath a heap of firewood, awaiting only a breath of wind to rise into the fire of manly courage. Then, looking carefully at him, he saw to his surprise that the circular mark of universal empire was imprinted on the baby's palm. At that moment, he was called upon by the attendants to help them to release the lion-cub from the child's clutch. His gentle

words of chiding, to the surprise of every one, achieved their object, and the King, taking Sarvadamana's hand, wondered at the keen pleasure the touch gave him.

"How extraordinary it is," he said, "that this beautiful child should be born to ascetic parents, who do their penance ever in the dust. How pretty are his inarticulate words, and how sweetly he smiles, and reveals his pearly teeth between his rose-bud lips."

"Sir," said one of the attendants, "he is not the saint's son indeed. But, oh, it is wonderful, wonderful!"

"What is wonderful, my good woman?"

"The striking resemblance between you and the child."

"Is that so? If he is not Kasyapa's son, to whom does he belong?"

"To the race of Puru."

"Really? We are then descended from the same stock. This is perhaps the reason of the resemblance between us. I know that the kings of my race, after devoting the early part of their lives to the care of their kingdom, love to seek a last asylum in sacred haunts.

But, how can any mere mortal hope to gain access to such a hallowed region as this ?"

"Sire," said the attendant, "this child is the son of a lady, who is the daughter of a heavenly nymph."

The King felt a sudden excitement.

"What is the name of the prince, whom she deigned to marry ?" he asked.

"Sire," the woman answered, "I cannot pollute my lips with the name of the wicked man, who deserted his own wife."

The King felt more and more excited, but knew that he could not with propriety enquire the name of the boy's mother. Fortune however came to his aid.

"Sarvadamana", cried the attendant ", look at that beautiful 'Sakuntala' (a bird)".

"My mother?" asked the child, "where is she ?"

"Ah" cried the King to himself, "the mother's name is Sakuntala? The coincidence is astounding. But, I dare not hope too much. The name is not uncommon among women."

As he stood trembling with hope and anxiety, he heard the servant bewailing the loss

of an amulet on the baby's wrist. Seeing it close by him on the ground, he picked it up, unheeding the warning cries of the women not to touch it.

"What is the matter?" he asked, looking at their petrified faces. "Why did you try to stop me from touching it?"

"Listen, great prince. This amulet was given to the boy by the divine Kasyapa, and it is so peculiar that, when it falls to the ground, none but the parents of the child can touch it without being hurt."

"How does it hurt them?"

"It changes into a snake and bites the person."

"Have you ever seen this happen?"

"Yes, indeed, often."

"Then, then," cried the King snatching the astonished boy into his arms, "this is indeed my beloved child, and my most cherished desire will be fulfilled."

"Don't hold me," said the boy, "I want my mother."

"We will go to her together, my son."

"I am not your son, but the son of Dushyanta."

At that moment, Sakuntala, to whom the attendants had run with the wonderful news of the amulet, arrived on the scene full of expectation. She had the marks of penance and suffering on her person. The King could hardly recognise her beautiful face in the emaciated outlines of her features. Yet, with her patient and ascetic expression, she looked but the more lovely to him, and his heart ached at the wrong he had done her. He humbly fell at her feet, begging her forgiveness for his wicked behaviour. Sakuntala, on her part, hardly able to believe that this pale and sad man could be her husband, responded with tears of joy and sweet words of pardon.

"The anger of destiny has been at last satisfied. You were not to blame, my lord. My own evil actions in a previous life must have brought down the punishment on me. Otherwise, how could such a generous man as you have acted so cruelly?"

"Most beloved of women, some cloud of darkness thrown by an evil power, must have obscured my memory. But, heaven has again brought us together, as, when the moon, freed from his eclipse, blends his rays again with his Rohini. See this signet ring, my wife. The moment I recovered it, my memory came back. Will you receive it again?"

"No, no, my husband. It allowed itself to be lost at a most inopportune moment. And I can no more look at it with affection."

The charioteer, Mathali, at that moment, came in, and, congratulating the King on his happiness, conducted him and his wife before the august Kasyapa and his wife Adithi, who greeted them kindly:

"Hail to the beautiful Sakuntala,
Hail to her noble son, and hail to thee,
Illustrious Prince—rare triple combination
Of virtue, wealth, and energy united!"

The king told his whole story to the divine sage, begging him to account for the loss of memory, which had made his action so despicable. Kasyapa told him not to be unhappy any more, for the evil fancy that had possessed his mind was not due to his

own character, but had been the effect of the curse of the angry sage, Durvasa. Immensely relieved and happy, the royal couple prostrated themselves at his feet. In return for their homage, the sage blessed their baby son :

> "Soon, a resistless hero, shall he cross
> The trackless ocean, borne above the waves
> In an aerial car, and shall subdue
> The earth's seven sea-girt isles. Now has he gained
> As the brave tamer of the forest-beasts,
> The title Sarvadamana ; but then
> Mankind shall hail him as King Bharata,
> And call him the supporter of the world."

Then, the sage bade them send a message to Kanwa, giving him the happy news of his daughter's re-union with her husband. Finally, he blessed them and their imperial rule over the world :

"May abundant showers", said Kasyapa "be sent down by the God Indra and secure luxurious harvests on earth. Thus, by union with the God of heaven, may earth be blessed with innumerable benefits. Is there anything else that you desire, my son ?"

"What else can I wish for, holy father?" said Dushyanta, "except this:

May kings reign only for their subjects' weal;
May the divine Saraswati, the source
Of speech, and goddess of dramatic art,
Be ever honoured by the great and wise;
And may the purple self-existent God,
Whose vital Energy pervades all space,
From future transmigrations save my soul."

MALAVIKAGNIMITRA.

MALAVIKAGNIMITRA is a drama in Five Acts by the well-known poet Kalidasa. It has a historical background. The chief character Agnimitra was a King of the Sunga dynasty who lived about the 2nd Century B. C. and ruled over Vidisa (modern Bhilsa). The incidents related in the drama, viz., the invasion of Vidarbha and the partition of the Kingdom between Yagnasena and Madhavasena are no doubt historically true. Nor is it possible to regard the story of Agnimitra's marriage with Malavika as a wholly fictitious incident, invented by the poet. The truth apparently is that Kalidasa had the materials before him in broad outline and used them as the framework of a story of love and romance. The Vidushaka, who is the motive force of the play, is clearly a creation of Kalidasa, just as the numerous incidents and

details of the plot are his inventions. There is no reason to doubt that the play was written by Kalidasa, as was at one time doubted by some Oriental scholars. The play is distinctly Kalidasian in quality and style.

MALAVIKAGNIMITRA

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

AGNIMITRA—King of Vidisa & Hero.
PUSHYAMITRA—Father of Agnimitra.
VASUMITRA—Son of Agnimitra.
GAUTAMA—The Vidushaka.
GANADASA—Dance-Master.
HARADATTA— Do.
YAGNASENA—King of Vidarbha.
MADHAVASENA—A rival of Yagnasena.
SUMATHI—Minister of Madhavasena.
VIRASENA—Commander-in-Chief of Agnimitra.
DHARINI—1st Queen of Agnimitra.
IRAVATI—2nd Queen of Agnimitra.
MALAVIKA—Sister of Madhavasena & Heroine.
VAKULAVALIKA } Maids.
NIPUNIKA } Maids.
VASULAKSHMI—Daughter of Dharini.

MALAVIKAGNIMITRA

IN ancient India there was a kingdom called Vidisa ruled over by a king named Agnimitra. Adjacent to his territories was the kingdom of Vidarbha, where reigned a king called Yagnasena. There were constant feuds between the two rulers. Agnimitra espoused the cause of one Madhavasena, a rival to the throne of Vidarbha and entered into an alliance with him for taking his sister Malavika in marriage, notwithstanding that he already had two wives, Dharini and Iravati.

Madhavasena was captured by Yagnasena's forces in one of the encounters between them and thrown into prison. When Agnimitra demanded his unconditional release, Yagnasena declined to comply with the demand; and thereupon Agnimitra ordered his commander-in-chief, Virasena, to invade the kingdom of Vidarbha.

After the seizure of Madhavasena, his minister Sumathi set out for Vidisa with

Malavika and his sister Kausiki to carry out the promise of Madhavasena. As part of the route lay through jungles, he joined a party of caravans proceeding to Vidisa. But *en route* they were attacked by a gang of dacoits. A fierce battle was joined and the merchants valiantly resisted the onslaught of the marauders; but they were ultimately overwhelmed and routed. In the melee, Sumathi lost his life. Kausiki lost consciousness and was left for dead by the brigands. When she regained her consciousness it was with great sorrow that she perceived that her brother had been killed and Malavika carried away by the robbers. With a heavy heart, she performed the last rites of her brother; and, taking to herself the habit of a religious, she bent her steps towards Vidisa and gained admission into Agnimitra's palace. There she became known as the Parivrajika and was soon on intimate terms with Queen Dharini.

Malavika, however, was not long in the custody of the brigands. For they soon came up against a party of frontier guards of Virasena, who immediately gave battle to them and

rescued Malavika from their custody. Virasena sent her under escort to his sister Dharini, commending her talents and aptitude for music and dance. Dharini sent her to her Dancing-Master to learn dancing; and soon Malavika was making rapid progress with her lessons.

Malavika's arrival had been noticed by the Parivrajika, and there had been mutual recognition between the two; but, for reasons of her own, she kept Malavika's identity a secret, and, in consequence, nobody in the palace knew her real identity. She lived in the Palace as one of the maids of Dharini, learning music and dance.

After Malavika's arrival, Dharini had had executed a portrait of herself and her maids and was, one day, examining it for its likeness, when Agnimitra suddenly entered the apartment and saw the portrait in her hands. When he took the portrait in his hands and examined it, he noticed a figure of transcending beauty in the group. Concluding that she must be a recent arrival and curious to know who she was, Agnimitra asked Dharini for her name.

Dharini was loathe to give any information and evaded his queries, but his young daughter Vasulakshmi, with child-like innocence, gave out that she was Malavika. Agnimitra had not known his betrothed by sight and the mere mention of her name did not enlighten him. But he was struck with her matchless beauty and fell in love with her.

In course of time, Agnimitra's love for Malavika became so great that he became love-sick for her. Her vision, though seen only in a picture, kept constantly rising in his mind, and he was seized with a burning desire to get a sight of her in person. But he was anxious to avoid an estrangement between himself and his Queens by taking high-handed steps to secure his object. But he saw no means of accomplishing his object as Dharini, suspecting the king's partiality for Malavika, became more vigilant in guarding her from his observation. In despair he turned to Gautama, his Vidushaka, to devise the means of his getting a sight of Malavika.

Gautama evolved an ingenious plan for fulfilling Agnimitra's wishes. In the palace, there

were two Dance-Masters, Ganadasa, the preceptor of Malavika and Haradatta. The former was regarded as the protege of the Queen and the latter of the King. But both held the same rank in the palace and were men of equal ability and learning. Gautama's plan was to provoke a quarrel between them by working on their jealousies and compel them to seek the decision of the King on their relative merits. The King would be obliged to accept the position of the arbitrator thus forced on him and require them to give demonstration of their skill. In a trial of skill in dancing a person's ability is judged not merely by his knowledge of theory, but particularly by his ability to impart his knowledge to others. Accordingly, the Dance-Masters would be called upon to give proof of such abilities through the demonstrations of their pupils; and that would furnish the opportunity for the King to get a view of Malavika, whose reputation was already very high for quick apprehension and an exquisite style. But the success of the scheme depended on some disinterested person suggesting the

practical demonstration as, otherwise, Dharini would scent some plot in it. The Queen had a great regard for the Parivrajika and, if the suggestion proceeded from her, Dharini's suspicions might be laid at rest. So Gautama decided to take the Parivrajika into his confidence. She was only too ready to fall in with his wishes and to play her part in promoting his designs.

The quarrel was provoked. Ganadasa taunted Haradatta that they differed in their abilities as ocean and pond. Haradatta retorted in the presence of respectable persons that Ganadasa was not equal to the dust of his feet. Thus openly insulted, the two adversaries sought the audience of the King to place their grievances before him. The King heard their complaints and, with a view to adjudicate on their relative merits, sent for the Queen and the Parivrajika, ostensibly to ensure that Ganadasa received fair-play but really to avert suspicion from himself.

When the Queen heard of the dispute and of the King's invitation to her, she felt uneasy about Ganadasa; but she had no suspicion of

the real nature of the move. After she and the Parivrajika had taken their seats, the King directed the Masters to commence their disputation. But the Parivrajika at once interposed that dancing was an art essentially of ocular demonstration and not one for argument. It was then that Dharini realised the danger of the situation; and, when appealed to for her views, stated that the quarrel itself was not to her liking. Nevertheless, the discussion proceeded as to how best to test their abilities. The Parivrajika had already seen the skill of both the disputants. She was satisfied that they were of equal ability in the practice of the art. But some might be good in practising the art themselves, but lack the skill to impart it to others. Others still might be able as teachers but not possess sufficient skill in the practice of the art themselves. He was then the best teacher who combined both those qualities in himself. After the Parivrajika had propounded her views thus, the Vidushaka clinched her argument by putting it in a nut-shell to the masters that their ability to give practical training would be the acid

test of their capacity. The Queen argued if it would be the fault of the preceptor if a dull pupil failed to profit by the instruction. But Gautama butted in that the very acceptance of such a pupil was manifest proof of lack of wisdom in the preceptor. When the Queen refused to give her assent to Ganadasa to embroil himself in a dispute which seemed to have no other object but the fulfilment of her husband's wishes, Gautama rallied him on his good fortune in having the queen on his side and assured him that he had no need to fear for his position. Ganadasa thereupon appealed to the Queen to save him from ignominy and the taunts of the world.

" He is called a grocer that deals in knowledge, to whom knowledge is only a source of living and who, being concerned to retain his position, is afraid of a controversy and meekly submits to insults by others."

And if the queen refused to give him the opportunity to vindicate his reputation, the world would interpret his abstention only in that light and heap obloquies on him.

The Queen was in the horns of a dilemma. At last she suggested that both the masters might give their demonstrations before the Parivrajika in private. But again she was check-mated in her designs by the Parivrajika insisting that the judgment of one person, however clever, was never a safe guide. Reduced to complete helplessness and importuned by Ganadasa to give her assent, Dharini at last gave in with great reluctance, at the same time observing to her husband that it would have been a good thing if he displayed as much ingenuity in State-matters.

Soon after, the party adjourned to the Dance-hall to witness the demonstration. A preliminary discussion arose as to who was to be given priority and, at the suggestion of the Parivrajika, it was decided that Ganadasa was entitled to precedence by reason of his greater years. Ganadasa accordingly entered the hall followed by Malavika. Agnimitra saw Malavika in person for the first time, and was captivated by her superb beauty. She was many times more lovely than in the picture.

It had been arranged that Malavika should perform the dance known as "*Cchalitham*", after singing the tune of Sarmishta's verse, composed for that purpose. In that verse, a maiden poured out her heart for her absent lover and prayed to him to realise the intensity of her love for him and her helpless condition. Malavika's singing was entrancing; but her dancing was no less exquisite. The grace of her movements, the elegance of her bearing, the accuracy with which she kept measure with time and the realistic manner in which she expressed the different passions and feelings, combined with her own lovely form made a profound impression on every one. Agnimitra, who had not missed the least detail, was in ecstacies of delight.

But the dance was soon over; and the time had come for Malavika to make her exit. It was not, however, the intention of the Vidushaka to allow her to depart so quickly. So he objected that he had observed certain irregularities and asked if others had noticed any. The Parivrajika had not noticed any. The dance was unexceptionable. Agnimitra

confessed to growing diffidence in his own protege , after seeing Malavika's dance. Then Ganadasa asked Gautama for the irregularity he had noticed. The Queen rebuked him for taking the Vidhushaka seriously. But Ganadasa persisted, only to be told that the customary offerings to a Brahmin before the commencement of a performance had not been given in that case. Every one laughed at his grand discovery, but he had gained his object. After explaining that it was not a regular stage-performance Ganadasa retired with his disciple, and Agnimitra felt a void in his existence, as though the sun of his destiny had set.

Soon after, Haradatta entered to know the King's pleasure. The King's object had, however, been attained ; and he had no further interest in the quarrels of the dance-masters. But decorum required that he should go through the whole of the affair ; and he consented with reluctance. But just then it was brought to their attention that it was noon-time ; and Gautama seized the opportunity to protest that he felt very hungry and that medical opinion was opposed to postponement

of hours of meal. So Haradatta's performance was adjourned to the succeeding day and the party dispersed.

The next morning Haradatta gave his demonstration ; and it was unanimously agreed that both the Masters were of equal ability and that what excellence there was on Ganadasa's side was due solely to Malavika's superior talents. And the episode of the Dance-Masters' quarrel came to an end.

From the time of his seeing Malavika, Agnimitra's whole thoughts were with her. His mind scarcely found peace when he was not contemplating her elegance. He sought solace in dwelling on the numerous details connected with her dance. But, for all that, he did not get complete tranquillity of mind. He was oppressed with doubts and fears about her feelings towards him. He kept constantly asking himself if she loved him or would reciprocate his love. Sometimes he imagined that the song of Sarmishta was meant as a covert reference to her own lot and an appeal to him. But he could not with certainty decide on the state of her feelings ; and the

more he thought of it, the more miserable he became. At last he asked Gautama to ascertain her mind. Gautama readily agreed and instructed Vakulavalika, a confidante of Malavika, to sound her, touching her feelings.

But Agnimitra was restless and impatient to ascertain the truth. He was seized with a fit of *ennui*, and was unable to think of any means of diverting himself. When, however, Gautama reminded him of his engagement to meet Iravati in the garden, he felt a reluctance to meet her, as his thoughts were wholly occupied with Malavika and he would be obliged to dissemble with Iravati. But abstention from the engagement did not appear to him to be a much better policy either. For Iravati would take her disappointment to heart; and the king wished to avoid wounding her susceptibilities. So, he decided to meet her and went to the garden accompanied by the Vidushaka.

Iravati had not arrived yet; and Agnimitra was amusing himself, looking at the trees and flowers when Malavika was seen coming alone in the garden. She proceeded straight towards an *Asoka* tree and sat down underneath

it. She had not noticed the King or the Vidushaka. Curious to know what brought her there, Agnimitra placed himself near her behind a tree, so as to be within hearing.

The *Asoka* tree was a favourite of Queen Dharini, and had not borne any flowers that year, though the spring was far advanced. According to the prevalent belief, if a barren *Asoka* was touched with the foot of beautiful damsel, it would blossom forth in its full vernal bloom ; and Dharini was anxious to try that remedy on the tree. Being herself disabled, she deputed Malavika for that task, promising her that if the tree blossomed forth within five days, she was to obtain the fulfilment of her wishes. That was the reason for Malavika's presence there. She had come in advance. Vakulavalika was to join her there with dress and ornaments.

Being alone--as she imagined herself to be—Malavika gave way to her thoughts and began to soliloquise over her hard destiny and the vain hopes and aspirations of her heart. Agnimitra was curious to know what those aspirations were and to whom her words had reference. Like

a typical lover, he was only too eager to believe himself to be the cause of all her yearnings; but he was oppressed with doubts, and speculation could not bring him nearer to truth. A surmise was no substitute for certainty. While in this state of suspense, Vakulavalika entered with toilet materials and began decorating Malavika. While about it, she began to draw her out regarding Agnimitra, bearing in mind the injunctions of Gautama.

While they were thus occupied, Iravati entered the garden with her maid Nipunika, and not finding her husband at the rendezvous, and espying Malavika under the *Asoka*, approached the tree unnoticed, and hid herself behind a cover to overhear the conversation. The king had not noticed her arrival; nor was Iravati aware of the King's presence in the proximity.

Iravati was indignant at the turn the conversation was taking. Vakulavalika was making significant observations to Malavika about the King. At first Malavika was reticent about her feelings towards the King; but, after a time,

she remarked that she could not hope for such a high favour and that the thought of Dharini sent a shiver over her. When Vakulavalika finished decorating her, she observed to her in ambiguous terms: " Here stands before you one who is fit to be enjoyed by you." Malavika betrayed herself, asking " Is it the King?" Vakulavalika replied smiling that she meant the overhanging tendrils, for wearing on the head. Iravati was enraged and exchanged glances with Nipunika. But Agnimitra was happy to have a convincing proof of Malavika's love for him.

Now that his doubts had been resolved, Agnimitra was impatient to discover himself to Malavika, Just then Malavika had touched the *Asoka* with her right foot: and the King seized the opportunity to make his apparition, and enquire if the touch had given her any pain. The solicitude of the King made Iravati bitter. But when he proceeded further and asked her to administer a similar touch to him, so that he might bear the "flower-courage", which he had not borne since he saw her, it was more than Iravati could stand. She burst

in upon the group in frenzied rage, charging the King with faithlessness. Her unexpected *debut* created a consternation in the hearts of all, and Malavika and Vakulavalika made their escape at the earliest opportunity. But Agnimitra could find no way of escape from the embarrassing situation and pleaded in extenuation that he meant no harm and was only amusing himself, as she was late in coming. But Iravati was inexorable and continued to rate him in severe language. So he prostrated himself before her, hoping to appease her wrath. But she was still implacable and turned away from him in haughty disdain.

When Dharini was appraised of these incidents by Iravati, she threw Malavika and Vakulavalika into a cell, in order to mollify Iravati, with strict injunctions to the keeper not to release them without seeing the ring bearing the design of a serpent.

When the news of Malavika's incarceration reached the King's ears, he was chagrined that she should suffer such indignities and hardships on his account, and desired Gautama to devise the means of rescuing her from the cell

and taking her to a rendezvous. Gautama was ready with a project which he communicated to the King. Agnimitra approved of it and went to see Dharini, who was confined to bed with pains in the leg. Gautama went straight to the garden, punctured two marks in his finger with a thorn and rushed back into Dharini's chamber exclaiming wildly that he had been bitten by a serpent and that the poison was working like a hectic in his blood. He showed the marks made by the serpent's teeth and simulated all the symptoms of snake-poison. Every one was alarmed for Gautama's life, except the King. Gautama appealed in a pathetic tone to the King to look after his aged mother after his death and asked forgiveness of Dharini for any offence he might have given her in serving the King.

In the meantime, the Court Physician had been sent for. But he was privy to Gautama's scheme and directed that the patient might be taken over to him. Accordingly, Gautama was removed from Dharini's chamber and the King also, soon after, took leave of her.

A little later, the Physician sent word to the Queen that the patient was progressing well and that there was no danger to his life, but that an object bearing the figure of a serpent was necessary for the purpose of incantation. The Queen immediately handed her ring to the messenger, with instructions to return it as soon as its purpose was finished.

The ring thus secured, Gautama went straight to Malavika's keeper, showed her the ring, satisfied her curiosity by a plausible explanation and took Malavika and Vakulavalika to the rendezvous. Agnimitra, receiving intelligence of this, repaired thither by a secret passage. On his arrival, Vakulavalika left the place on some pretext and Gautama stood guard at the entrance, while the lovers, after a long period of despair and anguish, met for the first time in secret embrace.

But they were not for long to enjoy their happiness uninterrupted. Iravati, who was uneasy in mind at having spurned the king's prayer for forgiveness, wished to make amends for it by paying her respects to a portrait of his which was hanging in the place of rendezvous.

Besides, she had received information that Gautama was in that place and wished to congratulate him on his recovery from the snake-bite, which she still believed to be genuine. So she set out for that place with Nipunika and arrived there to find Gautama fast asleep at the entrance.

Just then Gautama began to talk aloud in his sleep, urging Malavika to supersede her rival Iravati. Greatly provoked, Nipunika threw his staff on him, whereupon he woke up in alarm, crying "A serpent, a serpent." Iravati and Nipunika were hidden from his observation. On looking about, Gautama noticed that it was his own staff that had fallen on him and which he had mistaken for a serpent and observed laughing that for the moment he was afraid that he had been done for by a real serpent after the hoax he had played about a snake-bite. Iravati was astonished to learn the truth about the snake-bite. But it was a much more disagreeable surprise for her when, in response to Gautama's cries, the King came rushing towards the door, followed by Malavika who kept urging him not to go near a serpent.

Iravati was furious. She emerged from her hiding place and felicitated the king ironically on his day-time engagements. The party was thrown into a confusion by this unexpected turn of events, and the situation became very awkward for all. Agnimitra was non-plussed as to how to get out of the difficulty. Just then, however, intelligence was brought to them that Vasulakshmi had been chased by a monkey, that the gardeners had driven it off, but that she was trembling all over with fright. Agnimitra hastened to see his daughter and the company broke up.

Malavika was apprehensive of the displeasure of Dharini, when she should come to hear of the clandestine meeting. But when she learnt that the *Asoka* had blossomed forth in its full splendour even before the expiry of the five days, she was somewhat re-assured. For Dharini had promised to fulfil her wishes if the tree bore flowers.

Dharini heard of both these events and perceived that it was no longer possible to put any restraint on Malavika and that, in honour bound, she must consent to her union

with Agnimitra. With this resolve, she intimated to the King that she wished to have the pleasure of his company at a garden fete she was arranging; and, at the appointed hour, went to the garden with Malavika and the Parivrajika. The King had guessed Dharini's intention and was eager with expectation.

After the party had assembled, two maids who had lately arrived into the palace craved audience and were admitted. On entry they were recognised by Malavika and the Parivrajika as the members of Madhavasena's household. Asked about their antecedents, they related their connection with Madhavasena's household, the capture of Madhavasena and Sumathi's departure for Vidisa with Malavika and Kausiki. As they were left behind, they knew no further. At that stage the Parivrajika intervened and revealed her identity and detailed the rest of the story: how they were waylaid by robbers, how her brother was killed and Malavika carried away and how she herself on recovering consciousness went *incognito* to Vidisa and gained admission into the palace. The two

maids recognised their Kausiki in the Parivrajika, as also Malavika. Malavika's capture by the brigands, her rescue by Virasena's men and her subsequent entry into the palace were already known in the royal household. But no one except the Parivrajika had known her identity till then. Dharini felt pangs of regret that she had not treated Malavika with the respect due to her rank and complained to the Parivrajika that she had not done properly to have observed reticence about her. But the Parivrajika explained that a long time ago a soothsayer had predicted that Malavika's fortune would be low for a period of one year and that afterwards she would marry a suitable husband. Seeing the prophecy in the course of fulfilment, she had left the events to take their own course.

When the explanations were over, news was brought from the frontier that Vidarbha had been invaded and Yagnasena taken captive. Agnimitra forthwith ordered the kingdom to be divided between him and Madhavasena; each ruling over a half.

At the same time, glad tidings were received from his father Pushyamitra that the holy sacrificial horse which was sent under the protection of Vasumitra, preparatory to the " Rajasu Yagam " was challenged by a party of Yavana Cavalry, and that after a fierce battle the Yavanas were vanquished and the horse brought home safe. After extolling young Vasumitra's heroism, Pushyamitra invited his son to attend the Yagam with his family.

Great was the rejoicing in the palace on receipt of the news of Vasumitra's victory. Dharini was in ecstacies and was in a mood to accede to the King's wishes unreservedly. So she sent word to Iravati to obtain her consent to the proposed marriage and, after investing Malavika with the bridal veil and ornaments, gave her in marriage to Agnimitra. The lovers at last attained the consummation of their desires.

VIKRAMORVASIYAM

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

PURURAVAS—King of Pratishtana, the Hero of the Play.

MARIAVAKA—The Vidushaka, the confidential companion of the king.

AYUS—The son of the king.

NARADA—A divine sage, son of Brahma.

CHITRARADHA—The King of the Gandharvas.

KANCHUKI—The Chamberlain.

KESIN—A demon.

INDRA—The Lord of the Gods and King of Heaven.

BHARATA—A holy sage, the founder of Hindu Drama.

URVASI—A nymph of Heaven, the Heroine of the play.

CHITRALEKHA—Another nymph. Her friend, or maiden Attendant.

SATYAVATI—The wife of Chyavana.

VIKRAMORVASIYAM

THE morning sun was shining and the ethereal space was brightly lit when a number of celestial damsels flying on the cloudy path suddenly sent a shriek for help. These were the Apsarases that wait upon the divine court of Indra, and that day they had been returning from their attendance upon Kubera the lord of wealth, when suddenly a Rakshasa by name Kesin, the ruler of Hiranyapura waylaid them and kidnapped Urvasi the gem of their group, along with her attendant Chitralekha. Hence it was that the Apsarases cried for succour and besought the help of any friend of the Devas who might be passing that way at that hour.

King Pururavas the mighty, the grandson of the sun god (Surya), and the ruler of Pratisthana Nagara was returning in his aereal car from the solar sphere where he had

gone to attend upon the sun god, and heard the cry for help from the heavenly maidens. He hastened to them and the ladies with drooping faces and frightened looks quickly related to him what had befallen to their friend, whereupon the heroic Pururavas ascertained the direction in which the demon ran away, pursued and killed him with one arrow. He thus rescued both the maidens who for fear could not at first sight even know their deliverer, got them into his chariot and carried them off to their companions who had all the while been anxiously waiting on the top of the Hemakuta mountain, to know what has become of the king's attempt to release their friend. Urvasi out of mere fright was unconscious all along but was soon brought back to consciousness in the company of her friends. Great was the joy at the time of the meeting and many were the expressions of gratitude poured upon Pururavas, but he was too much engrossed in looking at the faultlessly beautiful form of Urvasi and was saying to himself 'Rightly did Narayana create her

from his thigh to excel all celestial beauty.' Urvasi who, by this time, could fully understand to whom she owed her deliverance, saw in the person of the king reason to thank the demons for being instrumental in bringing about that present situation. Urvasi and Pururavas were smitten with love for each other and they were alone for a time in that crowd.

By this time the danger that had befallen Urvasi became known to Indra, who sent Chitraradha the king of the Gandharvas to fly to relieve her from the demon, and Chitraradha starting on his commission came to know of the deliverance effected by Pururavas. He soon joined the rejoicing group of damsels and thanked the king in the name of Indra, for having thus restored that magnificent jewel of the celestial court. Pururavas expressed his obeisance to the lord of heavens, delivered Urvasi formally and excused himself for not being able to accompany him to the capital of Svarga, on account of certain duties he had to discharge at that time in his own capital. They departed,

and Urvasi, while rising from the top of the mountain into the skies, got her necklace entangled into a thicket and requested the help of her attendant. So she stayed a few minutes more than the others and threw her last amorous glances at the king before she finally departed to the heavens. Pururavas felt, as if the flying Urvasi had been carrying away his heart along with her, like the swan that flies away with the broken lotus stalk entangled in her feet.

The king returned to his abode and began to attend to his normal duties, but very soon a change in his person was discerned by people who were near and dear to him. The one that was most affected was the Queen, the daughter of the king of Benares, who grew very anxious to know the cause of the king's sullenness and desire for a sort of retired life. The only one that was aware of the king's secret was the Vidushaka, who had been the king's personal attendant in most of his love affairs and though he was enjoined by the king to observe the utmost secrecy with reference to this affair, could not contain

himself and was too ready to give out the information to the first individual that happened to see him, when the female attendant of Her Majesty came to him with the very intention of fishing out the information from him. She could very easily learn from him that the king was in love with Urvasi and at once carried it to the ears of the queen.

By this time the king freed himself from the duties of the state and came back to his wonted abode of solitude to pore upon the picture of Urvasi that had permanently been impressed upon his mind. He met there his friend the Vidushaka, and both of them sat together thinking of the topic so dear to the king. At the suggestion of the Vidushaka they removed to the pleasure grove (Pramadavana) hoping that the king would possibly derive some solace from the beautiful scenery around him. On the other hand the cool wafting breezes, the cuckoo's sweet cooing and the chirping of the happy birds soon fanned the fire of love, which burned in him with all the greater intensity. While the king was

passing his tedious hours in his pleasure-grove, the condition of Urvasi was in no way enviable. The pleasures of paradise after which everybody hankers, were the most painful to her, removed as she was from her lover.

Snatching a few hours of leisure and accompanied by her attendant Chitralekha she flew down to the mortal world to feast upon the sight of the idol of her heart. On the way she felt how immodest her action was, but the motive force of love was sufficiently strong to carry her through the journey, and soon she discovered her lover in his Pramadavana quite absorbed in his own thoughts of love. She saw him so occupied but was not sure if she was herself the object of the king's adoration, and so wanted to overhear their conversation by remaining invisible. She did so and was very soon convinced of his love to her. Not willing to keep him any longer in uncertainty she wanted to express her attachment to him and devised a plan to achieve that end. She created a bhurja leaf by her supernatural powers and

wrote a love message on it which read as follows, 'My Lord, if indeed I, whose heart you do not know, am towards you (who love me) such as am supposed by you, then how is it that even the Nandana breezes become excessively hot to my person rolling about through restlessness even on a bed of Parijata, flowers,' and threw it near them. The king read it and gave it to the Vidushaka who said to him ' How is it that Urvasi has merely made her love blossom but not bear fruit.' At this juncture Urvasi requested her friend to convey her love in person to the king, before she could prepare herself to appear before him. While Chitralekha was thus explaining Urvasi's condition to the king, she discovered herself at the opportune moment, and the king overjoyed at her appearance received her with extended arms and made her sit close by him. Scarcely did a few minutes pass when the messenger of the gods announced to Chitraleka from above, that she should hasten Urvasi to get ready to assume her part in the staging of a drama composed by the heavenly bard Bharata, to witness

which Lord Indra had been waiting along with the rulers of the cardinal points. Thus Urvasi was obliged to part from the king a second time. After her departure the king wanted to console himself by looking at the billet sent to him by Urvasi and asked the Vidhushaka for it, but having lost it he had merely to blink the question.

While the king was so engaged with his own love affair, the queen, whose fire of jealousy was soon wafted to a flame by her attendant's information, came to the Pramada-vana to overhear them. She accidentally glanced at the billet carried away by the southern breeze, took it up out of curiosity, and heard it read by her attendant. The cup of insult was full to the brim and the queen introduced herself abruptly on the scene, held up the billet and handed it over to the king in the most unexpected manner, just at the time when he was searching for it. The king almost taken aback by this unexpected turn of events, wanted to extricate himself from the difficulty by saying that it

was not the same Bhurja patra for which they had been searching. The Vidhushaka put forth another excuse saying that the king was really suffering from an attack of biliousness for which he advised the queen to administer the proper remedy. Seeing the incoherence of their explanations the queen started in full rage to go away to her own chambers, when the king fell at her feet and begged of her pardon. With a half reluctant heart the queen went her way only to be struck with remorse later on. Seeing that the sun had already attained the highest position in the sky, the king retired to his chambers along with his companion.

Urvasi thus reminded by the messenger ot gods flew to the heavens to assume her own part in the drama to be staged before the gods. The divine theatre was thronged with spectators with Indra at its head. The play began. Everybody was rapt in expectant attention. Urvasi played Lakshmi and Menaka played Varuni. Varuni questioned Lakshmi before she attended the Swayamvara gathering, whom she loved. Forgetting

momentarily herself and her character in the play, Urvasi was once more with her lover Pururavas in her imagination and replied at that very unwary moment that she was in love with Pururavas instead of with Purushothama. This misdemeanour before the royal audience was enough to enrage the celestial playwright and stagemanager, Bharata, and he cursed Urvasi to lose her celestial nature. After the drama was concluded Urvasi bashfully stood before Indra looking a request of forgiveness, which was immediately granted saying that she would be permitted to live with her love Pururavas on the earth till he would see his own offspring from her.

Here in Pratisthana the royal consort, struck with remorse for having thus repudiated her lord's expressions of excuse and penitence, was searching for an opportunity to conciliate herself with her husband, and devised the performance of a Vrata in consultation with her attendant. Accordingly she sent word to the king to await her arrival on the Maniharmya palace in the evening at the time

of the moonrise. The king could see through the plan of the queen, and accordingly awaited her arrival at the appointed place, accompanied by the Vidushaka. Seeing the magnificent orb of the moon rise in the east Pururavas paid his homage to his sire's sire and prayed to him. But soon he began to take up to his wonted tune, his love for Urvasi, and was almost lost in it when Urvasi herself attended by her faithful friend came to the very same place and remained invisible to hear the professions of the king during her absence. He was remembering, incident after incident, his experiences with Urvasi and saying that his body with the exception of one arm was useless as it was the only portion of his body that came into contact with her while getting down from his ethereal car on the mountain of Hemakuta. Feeling that any more delay on her part would be inexcusable, Urvasi was on the point of revealing herself when the servants announced the approach of the queen.

Clad in white garments, with only Mangala Sutra on her body, and the sacred grass on

her head, the fasting queen arrived at the place, was welcomed by the king and questioned as to the purpose of her present vow (vratam.). She bowed to her lord and answered him that she had started this penance to propitiate her lord. The king replied in the proper way and told her how he was overjoyed by her attention, upon which the penitent lady worshipped the Brahman Vidhushaka, gave him presents of eatables, money and clothes and told her lord "May the Chandra with his Rohini witness this statement of mine? I shall not interfere with your majesty's love affairs. Your lordship is free to love whomsoever it pleases your lordship, if thereby the present bodily and mental condition is improved." Having conciliated her lord thus and received his loving permission the queen withdrew to her own chambers leaving him and his companion to themselves. Urvasi who had been witnessing all the loving attention paid by Pururavas to his consort, began to feel uncomfortable but was soon relieved by the ungrudging permission of the queen granted to the king.

The king again lapsed into his reverie about Urvasi and wished that she should come down from the heavens and amorously close his eyes from behind. She heard the wish and soon translated it into action and once more did the lovers meet in the Pramadavana, but this time not to part so soon. Having thus discharged her duty Chitralekha bade fare-well to her friend and flew to the heavens.

Having been permitted both by Indra and the royal consort, Pururavas now married Urvasi and having entrusted the state to his ministers, the Royal pair left to Gandhamadana-vana to spend their honeymoon. There amidst the most delightful surroundings, the cool mountain streams, and the inviting and shady bowers resounding with the wild cuckoos' song, time glided on. They thought that they could continue like that for some time at least, but fate which would have it otherwise soon kept ready the pangs of seperation to the unhappy couple. It so happened that they one day went on to the sandy banks of the Mandakini to enjoy a happy stroll and there a young Vidyadhara

lady was playing in the sand with pearls. The king gazed at her long and Urvasi who probably saw more than what was really meant by that long gaze of the king, wanted to punish him for his supposed misconduct by hiding herself from him for some time. With this intention, unobserved she slipped into the adjacent grove where-from she did not again emerge. The place she entered, really belonged to the forest of Kumaraswamin who, having taken upon himself eternal celibacy was practising there penance. There was a curse attached to that forest that, whichsoever woman enters it, would immediately be turned into a creeper. Poor Urvasi was not unaware of it but the curse of her Guru operated upon her mind at that moment and made her forget it. She was at once metamorphosed into a creeper.

Poor Pururavas who was being tossed by fate from happiness to misery and misery to happiness successively, very soon found out that he was alone and began to search for his love. He called and called until the trees and mountains echoed and re-echoed with his

love-sick cries; he searched every bower to see if she had hidden herself anywhere but nothing was of any avail. He was distracted and began to address the cuckoos, the clouds, the wild elephants and all the nature around him. While he was thus aimlessly wandering from place to place, he saw something shining red, in the cleft of a rock and began to think of what it could be. "What is it which shines yonder? It cannot be a piece of deer's flesh left by the lion which preyed upon it, nor can it be a piece of live charcoal. Oh! It is a precious gem sparkling like the red asoka flower, and the sun looks as if he is trying to pick it up with his rays. It attracts me. I shall go and bring it. But what should I do with it? The dear one whose plaited hair decked with celestial flowers, I could adorn with this precious gem, she herself is now away from me, and so I shall not insult the precious stone by soiling it with my fears."

Soliloquising thus he was about to leave the stone and go his own way when an invisible voice said to him, "O son, take that stone.

It is the Sangamaniya jewel produced out of the lace of Parvati's foot and he who wears it will very soon meet with his dearest." Having heard this the king thought that it must be Some ancient sage in the shape of an animal, or some invisible and benevolent Providence that had so advised him, took up the precious stone and began to address it as follows "O, jewel! If thou canst bring me the jewel of my heart, I shall make you the ornament of my head, even as Lord Siva wears the digit of the moon on his head." He again began to wander in his distraction and looking at a creeper, clasped it as if it was his own love. Fortunately it was the very creeper into which his love has been metamorphosed and by the touch of the Sangamaniya she regained her form in no time. He looked at her and addressed her saying, "O, love, having parted from you I was like one immersed in darkness, and having got you back fortunately I feel that I am like a dead man attaining consciousness."

Urvasi said "O, my lord, though I was prevented from expressing myself I was

witnessing all that had happened to you."

Pururavas asked "What obstruction, my dear; where did you go leaving me all this while to suffer in my loneliness"?

Urvasi explained to him at length the curse attached to her, how she became a creeper, and how the touch of the Sangamaniya stone alone could bring her back to her usual form. The king then showed her the stone and adorned her hair with it, which by its red lustre gave her face the look of a red lotus. Urvasi then reminded her lord that it was a long time back they had come there and begged him to return to his capital, lest she should be disliked by the ministers and the people for having thus selfishly kept the king entirely to herself. At his request she carried him upon a cloud decorated with flashes of lightning, back to Pratisthana.

They returned to the capital and were living a happy life for a very long time with no desire unfulfilled except the want of a heir. One day it so happened that Pururavas went along with his ladies to have a bath in

the holy place where the Ganges and the Jumna meet. The servants to whom all the jewels and dresses were entrusted were carrying them to a place of safety and on the way a kite perceiving the red Sangamaniya stone sparkle in the sun, mistook it to be a piece of flesh and carried it off in one swoop in its talons while the servant merely cried for help in bewilderment. The king hearing of this soon ran after the bird and sent the accompanying maiden to fetch a bow and arrows to strike the offender with. By the time she returned with the bow, the kite flew away out of reach and the king had merely to lay them aside. But soon a proclamation was made that the bird should be followed to its nest and hunted down to bring back the Sangamaniya.

The king and Vidushaka were talking of how dear the stone had been to them in as much as it was the same that brought back Urvasi, and presently the man in attendance entered with the stone and an arrow in hand and the report that that arrow from an invisible hand brought the offender down with his

booty. The king was agreeably surprised at its recovery, ordered that it may be properly purified and sent in and began to examine the arrow that was the cause of his seeing the gem back. Finding something written at its end he began to read it as follows : "This is the (Bana) arrow of Ayusha, the destroyer of enemies, the son of Urvasi and Pururavas." This was a more agreeable and greater surprise to the king. How could Urvasi from whom he never seperated himself give birth to the child, without his knowledge, is a question which was really perplexing to the king. He then remembered that when he performed a sacrifice in the forest of Naimisa, he had been obliged to be away from Urvasi and it must be then that the child should have been born.

While the king was just trying to link circumstances together, the chamberlain announced the arrival of a lady from Chyavana's penance-grove accompanied by a boy, and they were soon admitted into his presence. The lady Satyavati brought the boy and introduced him as his son by Urvasi, who, she

said brought him when a baby to the penance grove, told her that he was her child by the king, and asked her to bring him up with a request that the matter should be kept close. The boy that day behaved in disregard of the rules of the Ashrama by killing a bird flying with a piece of flesh in its beak and Chyavana hearing of this, ordered her to hand him over to his parents. She further intimated the king that the boy had undergone all the religious ceremonies of Jata Karna etc. in regular order, and mastered the science of archery. (Dhanurveda.) The king sent for Urvasi who came, received the boy and thanked the lady Satyavati for her kind help, when Satyavati took leave to go back to the ashrama.

The happy union was enjoyed to its fullest extent by all the people, when suddenly it was noticed that Urvasi had been shedding tears with her face turned aside. The king alarmed at this asked the reason of her sorrow upon such a happy occasion as that. Then she replied : "This is the time of our parting. Indra has ordered that I should stay with your Lordship till you should see

your own child by me and it is to avoid this and prolong my stay, that I kept him away from the palace under the pretext of his education."

"O, what a cruel fate is this to have cut away my happiness in this way" cried the king and determined to go away to the forest and lead the life of an ascetic leaving the Government in the hands of the Prince. The boy hearing of this asked "O father, can a young calf bear the burden of a grown up bull; can I take up the reins of Government into my hands at this age." The father replied: "O, no, my dear boy, be not afraid, the ruling talent is latent in you; it is not your age but your birth that will fit you into your new duties."

Just at that time Narada the divine sage was announced and admitted before the king, and to him the king, queen and the prince bowed. Narada blessed them and announced Indra's wish as follows: "O, Pururavas, we wish that you should not resign your warrior life and get into the forest to make penance. We are in need of your help in our future wars with

the demons. "We permit Urvasi to stay with you life long."

The joyful occasion terminated in the happy coronation (abhishekam) of the Prince with the holy waters brought by Narada.

BHAVABHUTI

BHAVABHUTI, th: author of the *Malati-Madhava*, stands next only to Kalidasa in point of eminence among Sanskrit poets. He is one of the few old Indian writers about whose personal history something definite is known. He was born in the early part of the 8th century A. D.; and, though a native of Vidarbha, passed the larger part of his literary life at the court of Yasovarma, King of Kanouj. Besides being a poet he was also a great scholar, learned in the Veda and the Sastras. We know this from the stanzas prefixed by him to his dramas, and it is borne out by the fact discovered in recent years that he was a pupil of Kumarila, the renowned Mimamsaka. Unlike Kalidasa who excelled in nearly all forms of the poetic art, Bhavabhuti appears only as a dramatist. There are three Plays to his credit. Two of them—the *Mahavira-charita* and the *Uttara-rama-charita* give us a dramatized version of the Ramayana. The latter which, as its name signifies, relates to

the later life of Rama has for long been held in high estimation by critics, some of them enthusiastically claiming for it a higher place than the *Sakuntala* of Kalidasa. Whether such a claim can be justified or not, the Play is undoubtedly a masterpiece of Indian literature. The plot of the third drama—the *Malati-Madhava*—is the invention of the poet. It has been described as 'an Indian *Romeo and Juliet* with a happy ending.' Its main theme is that in true love there is always an element of mystery which shapes its ends rough-hew them how we may. Bhavabhuti writes in a chaste and elevated style; and achieves distinction both in the construction of the plot and in the development of character. His particular appeal, like that of Kalidasa, is in the faithful manner in which he interprets the spirit of Hindu life in some of its essential characteristics, such for instance as its simplicity, its devotedness and its gentleness combined with a readiness for self-sacrifice of the most austere type in the cause of what it holds to be right.

MALATI AND MADHAVA

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MADHAVA—Hero, son of Minister Devarata.

MALATI—Heroine, daughter of Minister Bhurivasu.

MAKARANDA—A friend of Madhava.

KALAHAMSA—An attendant of Madhava.

NANDANA—Companion of Bhurivasu's royal master.

KAMANDAKI—A Buddhistic nun.

AVALOKITA AND SOUDAMANI—Her pupils.

LAVANGIKA—Malati's nurse.

MADAYANTIKA—Sister of Nandana.

MANDARIKA—Kalahamsa's sweetheart.

AGHORAGHANTA—A fanatic devotee of Kali.

KAPALAKUNDALA—His pupil.

MALATI AND MADHAVA

DEVARATA and Bhurivasu were two ministers of state—one employed in Vidarbha and the other in another kingdom whose capital was Padmavati. They were great friends in youth when they pursued their studies together; and before they parted, they had vowed to bring about matrimonial alliance between their children, if ever they should become fathers. There was born of Devarata in course of time a son; and of Bhurivasu, a daughter: the veriest jewels among children. The boy was named Madhava; and the girl, Malati. As Madhava grew up and was fit to go out to learn, his father sent him to Padmavati. In selecting that place for study, Devarata had the idea that Madhava's presence there might put his old friend in mind of the bridal compact, if he chanced to forget it. He also thought that the great personal charm of the youth and the

qualities of his mind would serve as an inducement to Bhurivasu to offer Malati in marriage to him. Bhurivasu had not at all forgotten the school-day compact and the youthful couple would readily have been united in happy wedlock; but there was one formidable obstacle. The king of Padmavati had a boon companion by name Nandana, who was neither young nor handsome; and he was seeking the hand of Malati through the king. Bhurivasu was in a fix. He could not agree to such an ill-assorted match; nor could he openly refuse to give the girl in marriage to one that was the favourite of his royal master. When the king once actually broached the matter, he thought it best to give an inoffensive but equivocal reply. There was then at Padmavati a Bhuddhistic nun, Kamandaki, who was a great friend of both Devarata and Bhurivasu. In fact it was in her presence that they in their student days had plighted their word to see their children married. She had also known and fondled Malati from her infancy, and was therefore as much interested as the girl's parents themselves in seeing her

united to so worthy a youth as Madhava. Kamandaki was besides very clever; and her position as a nun gave her an advantage which a secular official like Bhurivasu could not well command. Bhurivasu, who knew the friendship which Kamandaki bore him, entrusted the whole affair to her and remained unconcerned to all outward appearance. Kamandaki on her part was not unwilling, though a nun, to undertake a good office of that sort—especially as she felt whenever she thought of the equal excellence of Malati and Madhava that they were almost predestined to wed each other.

Now it so happened that Malati was one day standing at an upper casement of her father's mansion as Madhava passed along the road below. She saw him, and seeing in her case was loving. This love at first sight deepened as she watched him passing not unoften the same way. It soon became known to her attendants that she was in love and that Madhava was her sweetheart. Kamandaki wanted first to see that the two young people fell in love with each other before she actively

exerted herself to bring about their union. Half of her wish had now been fulfilled; and the other half also was soon accomplished by the cleverness of one of her pupils, Avalokita. It was the spring season and the custom for youthful maidens then was to go to the Garden of Love outside the city to pay their adoration to Cupid there in the shrine dedicated to that deity. Avalokita, who knew that Malati would also follow the custom, arranged that Madhava should be present in the garden at the time. He went there alone. But seeing a *vakula* tree in full blossom approached it; and discovering a wealth of flowers adorning the ground beneath, he in a holiday mood picked up the new-fallen flowers and began to string them into a garland of exquisite design. He had not yet reached to the end of his task when Malati who had been worshipping inside the shrine came out. As Madhava saw her graceful form, he fell in love with her as quickly as she had done with him before. The sight so much distracted him that though he continued making the garland, it left visible traces on his workmanship. Malati

also came up to the tree with her attendants, attracted by the flowers; and as she neared the spot where Madhava stood, she saw him more closely than she had ever done before. Her attendants noticing a sudden change in her demeanour and recognizing Madhava in the youth that was there, first exchanged smiles with one another and then jestingly drew their mistress's attention towards him. Madhava, as he saw her, espied marks of love already deep-rooted in her though he could not guess who the fortunate youth was that had been the object of her interest. Soon after Malati, mounting a stately elephant that had been waiting for her, left the garden for her home but not without casting back glances in the direction of Madhava. He noticed this sign of love for him, although he hesitated to draw much hope from it. A little later Malati's nurse, Lavangika, returned to the place under the pretext of collecting the *vakula* flowers and told him how very much her mistress admired the garland which he was making. Madhava replied that he deemed it his great good fortune that it had

evoked the admiration of so noble and beautiful a damsel; and, taking the garland from off his neck, gave it to Lavangika. From her, he learnt that the maiden that had stolen his heart when he was feeling all helpless in her presence was no other than Malati, the daughter of the minister, Bhurivasu, his father's friend.

Madhava stood there till he could no longer see the form of Malati. When she disappeared from his sight, he turned back only to discover that what had filled him with joy but a moment ago had become a source of intense anguish to his heart. He left the place after some time and was returning slowly, dwelling on his new passion, when he met his bosom friend, Makaranda, advancing towards him. They both sat down in an arbour there. Surprised to find the change that had suddenly come over Madhava, Makaranda inquired of him as to its cause. After great pressure from him, Madhava opened his heart to his friend and told him how he had met Malati that morning and what all had happened. Makaranda, when he

learnt how love-forlorn Malati seemed and with what eagerness she looked at Madhava, assured him that she was in love with him; for virtue, as he said, is incapable of inconstancy and maidens like Malati will not allow their eyes to stray from the path which their hearts have once taken. When Makaranda was giving other reasons to think so, Madhava's attendant Kalahamsa, who had for some time been in the same part of the garden and had overheard all that had passed between the two friends, presented himself saying 'This also', and handed over to Makaranda a portrait of his master. Pining with love for Madhava, Malati had once put on canvas his likeness; and it was that very likeness that Kalahamsa had obtained through his beloved Mandarika and brought here now. It helped greatly to confirm what Makaranda had thought was probable and what Madhava's own heart was persuading him to believe ever since he had seen Malati. Now Makaranda who had not met Malati but had just heard so much about her beauty and dignity suggested to his friend that he might paint her portrait on

the same canvas so that he might delight his eyes by looking at it. Madhava consented; and not only did he paint her likeness there but also added the following couplet :—

"Whatever lovely things in life there be,
Sole joy thou art to me, O Malati."

Observing the two forms, Makaranda admired their mutual fitness and foretold that where God and Cupid had planned alike, nothing would go amiss. At that stage, Mandarika, who as we know was instrumental in bringing away the portrait, came pursuing Kalahamsa and demanded it of him. When she got it and discovered it improved in the manner mentioned, she pretended to be angry but inwardly felt glad that it would advance the cause that was so dear to the heart of Bhurivasu. From her, Madhava learnt how and when Malati had first seen him, and how deep her attachment for him was. Mandarika went away taking the portrait with her. Madhava and Makaranda also left the garden as the sun by then had reached the zenith.

These incidents were soon made known to Kamandaki who was glad that the mutual love

between Malati and Madhava to which she was looking forward had become a matter of fact, and she went to meet Malati the same afternoon. She was at that time alone with Lavangika, the subject of their conversation naturally being Madhava:

MALATI: And what happened then, friend?

LAVANGIKA: Then the high-souled youth gave me the garland (*Hands it over to Malati*).

MALATI: (*Receiving it and looking at it joyfully*): It is unevenly strung in one portion.

LAVANGIKA: You yourself are to blame for it.

MALATI; How?

LAVANGIKA: Because he was then so much taken off his mind by you.

MALATI: Friend Lavangika, you seem to have made up your mind to comfort me under all circumstances.

LAVANGIKA: Have I not told you that I saw with my own eyes clear signs of love in him?

MALATI: Could it all be natural to him and we are deceived? Or is it as you guess?

LAVANGIKA: (*Ironically*): Your deportment then, I suppose, was also natural!

MALATI: (*Bashfully*). And then?

LAVANGIKA: I returned and on my way went to Mandarika with whom I had left the portrait in the morning.

MALATI: With what intent?

LAVANGIKA: You know she is in love with Kalahamsa. I thought she would show it to him and bring good news.

MALATI: (*To herself*): Could he have shown the portrait to his master? (*To Lavangika*). And what is the good news she has brought?

LAVANGIKA: Here is the portrait and you see from it what solace Madhava should have derived from it. (*Shows the portrait to her*).

MALATI: (*Contemplating it*): Alas! Even now my heart feels not sure. It despairs where it ought to hope. Oh! I see something written here. (*Reads it*). Illustrious youth, your words are not less sweet than your form. But alas! your sight, though so joyful then, has become a torment to me since. Lucky are those damsels that never meet you; or having met, are yet able to be mistresses over their hearts.

At this stage Kamandaki stepped in accompanied by Avalokita; and in the conversation that followed, she artfully let fall the news that Malati was being sought by the king for his favourite Nandana. The mention of this unwelcome suitor sent a dart, as it were, to the heart of Malati; and she wished she had not been born. Kamandaki did not disclose her intention to thwart, if possible, Nandana's purpose; but she gave general advice which

suggested that the choice of a husband against the will of the elders in such circumstances was not without precedent in the history of virtuous maidens. Just then Avalokita reminded her of Madhava's indisposition, news of which has reached them before; and it gave occasion for Malati to learn that the youth on whom she had set her heart was the son of the much-esteemed Devarata, her father's great friend. His high birth recommended Madhava to her affections the more and it was a joy to her to find that her heart had, by instinct, made the right choice.

On a certain day, Malati was to go to the temple of Sankara outside the city and worship the God of all auspiciousness with flowers gathered by herself. When Kamandaki learnt of this, she instructed Madhava to be there at the time, with a view to bring about what may appear a casual interview between the two lovers. Kamandaki also went there. Soon Malati arrived accompanied by Lavangika, bewailing her lot in life which had made Nandana her suitor and wondering if she would ever again

have the joy of meeting Madhava. After she had gathered flowers for the worship, Kamandaki made her sit under a shady tree to rest from the fatigue. Then she spoke of the great merits of Madhava and mentioned how his passion for Malati was preying upon him. Lavangika in her turn informed Kamandaki of the similar affliction of her mistress owing to her love for Madhava and showed her the picture she had painted as well as the *vakula* garland she was wearing concealed round her neck. While they were conversing thus to the great joy of Madhava who remained unseen near by, and Malati was ardently listening, a sudden cry informed them that a ferocious tiger kept in the neighbouring garden had burst open the doors of its iron cage and attacked Madayantika, sister of Nandana, the would-be bride-groom of Malati. The news greatly agitated the party; and Madhava, leaving the place where he was, stepped into their midst creating agreeable surprise in Malati and himself feeling in her presence as if he were 'under a shower of heavenly ambrosia.' Soon

it transpired that Makaranda who had learnt of Nandana's efforts and was hastening to be with Madhava lest the unwelcome news should unsettle him too much, saw the pitiable state in which Madayantika was and went to her rescue. Makaranda was injured in his encounter with the tiger but he succeeded in slaying the animal and saving Madayantika from its fury. When Kamandaki and the rest went out, they saw Makaranda had fainted and was being supported by Madayantika. Seeing his friend in that sad condition, Madhava also swooned. After some time both the friends recovered, the one with Madayantika's ministrations and the other with Malati's loving caresses. The incident strengthened further the love between Malati and Madhava. It also gave rise to a like affection between Makaranda and Madayantika which betrayed itself through 'intermingling looks'. At this juncture, a messenger brought the news that the king had settled the marriage of Malati with Nandana; and Madayantika left with him to congratulate her brother. The news from

Nandana upset our hero who heard it for the first time now, and he cursed his fate which had planted in his heart such fruitless love. While Kamandaki was asking him to be of good cheer, Bhurivasu's wife sent word to her to fetch Malati immediately. She left the place and Malati followed her thinking that she was looking upon Madhava for the last time. Madhava also departed soon after along with Makaranda.

With all his hopes thus suddenly blighted, Madhava felt that he could never more think of love for his matchless Malati. So in a desperate mood he went in the evening towards the graveyard to invoke the aid of the spirits of the dead. But what was his surprise when he heard the wailings of Malati there! Forgetting his errand of despair, he rushed in the direction from which the pitiful cry came, and reached the temple of Kali. When he went in, he saw a terrific votary of Kali there, Aghoraghanta by name, standing with upraised sword and reciting a hymn. By his side stood a woman, Kapalakundala, his pupil. There was seated before them Malati

decked in all the symbols of the victim about to be sacrified. When Madhava saw her, she had the sweet syllables of his name on her lips which gave him one more proof of the secure place he had won in her heart. Without waiting for a moment, he dispossessed Aghoraghanta of the sword he held ; and, on inquiring Malati, he learnt that all that she knew was that she retired to rest in her chamber but found herself in the temple when she awoke. The fact was that Aghoraghanta had taken a vow to offer in sacrifice to Kali the most beautiful girl in the city for success in attaining some magic power and that was the final day of the vow. The choice had naturally fallen on Malati. Neither her exalted rank nor the security common to it had prevented her being conveyed away from her paternal mansion by Kapalakundala who could wander in the air. The result was this distressful scene in which Malati was in the presence of two such miscreants like an innocent fawn before two ferocious wolves. By this time Bhurivasu's people who had discovered that Malati was missing came near

the temple searching for her. Handing over Malati to their charge, Madhava questioned Aghoraghanta about his fiendish undertaking. On his replying in an impertinent tone, a duel ensued between them in which Madhava sprang with rage against the would-be perpetrator of the wicked deed and killed him. He left alone Kapalakundala because she was a woman. Malati was saved; but Kapalakundala resolved to wreak her vengeance upon the murderer of her chief.

This mischance did not affect the arrangements for Malati's marriage with Nandana; and once, when the wedding day approached, the king sent special presents to Malati in the form of jewels and garments. It was proposed that Malati should put on the bridal apparel in the temple of the guardian deity of the town—a fit place for such an auspicious act—and then meet the bride-groom. Kamandaki, determined to discomfit Nandana, sent both Madhava and Makaranda there beforehand. She then accompanied Malati to the temple, Lavangika also following them. Malati was in a miserable plight and her one thought

was how to end her existence. When the party had reached the temple, Kamandaki asked Lavangika to take Malati inside to offer worship. They both went in, and when Malati found herself alone with her friend she spoke to her as follows:—

MALATI: Sister Lavangika, your friend who is in great distress begs of you to meet Madhava after she is dead and speak to him consoling words so that he may do nothing that will rob the world of such a prince among youths. Thus will you fulfil your friend's last wishes.

LAVANGIKA: May God avert all harm! I cannot bear to hear more of this.

MALATI: Friend, dear is Malati's life to you, not Malati herself.

LAVANGIKA: How do you mean?

MALATI: You ask me to survive this shame. This is now my resolve: I have offended the saviour

of my life by becoming another's; and I want to atone for it by ceasing to be. Don't you stand in my way. (*Falls at the feet of Lavangika*).

Then Lavangika motioned to Madhava who along with Makaranda stood concealed within the shrine; and he, taking Lavangika's place gently, went on answering the sad questions which Malati put. At last, half-agreeing that she might do as she pleased, he begged for her last embrace. Poor Malati, least suspecting who had replaced Lavangika, rose with tearful eyes and threw herself into Madhava's arms thanking him for his permission. She thought of giving her friend as a final present the dearest thing in her eyes—the *vakula* garland which she so much cherished ever since the day it had reached her. As she was trying to transfer it from her neck to that of her friend, she discovered whom she was addressing. Madhava told her that she was too selfish in complaining of her own distress, ignoring his. At this time

Kamandaki came in; and, well pleased to find the time so propitious, betrothed Malati to Madhava showering her choicest blessings upon them both.

Kamandaki's plan compassed more than this betrothal. So she proposed that Makaranda should dress himself like Malati, wearing the clothes and putting on the ornaments presented by the king, to meet Nandana. When Makaranda accordingly appeared in Malati's attire before the party, he produced immense merriment. Kamandaki and Lavangika departed immediately with this mock-Malati, leaving our hero and heroine behind in charge of Avalokita. Makaranda played his new *role* so cleverly that the wedding with Nandana was celeberated, his identity being suspected by nobody. It was arranged that Malati should be taken to the bride-groom's residence in the evening. But meanwhile Nandana, impatient of meeting his new bride, approached Makaraanda in his usual vulgar mannar, but was repulsed by him with disdain. Nandana was greatly offended. He had heard of Malati's love for Madhava. Making that the plea for

rejecting her, he left his supposed bride in great wrath. Kamandaki had succeeded in creating a dislike for Malati in Nandana's mind, but the final success of her plan was yet far from sight, as the king's attitude in the matter had to be reckoned with. When the news of Malati's affront reached Madayantika, she felt the insult to her brother as her own and resolved to see Malati and prevail upon her to agree to meet her brother in good humour. Madayantika reached Bhurivasu's residence with much indignation but as she entered Malati's apartment, Makaranda noticing her come pretended to be asleep. Madayantika, unwilling to disturb him, seated herself on his couch and began to converse with Lavangika. After they had referred to the untoward incident that had enraged Nandana, the conversation turned upon Madayantika's love for Makaranda, her great benefactor. As she confessed her deep love for him, Makaranda was greatly pleased to listen to it. On her being cunningly asked whether, if Makaranda met her that moment and proposed to marry her, she would yield her assent, she replied

that he who had hazarded his life for her sake had entire liberty over her. Makaranda discovered himself then and Madayantika, having agreed to run away with her lover, they all started in the night for the garden where Malati and Madhava were. Meanwhile the city guards who had been apprised of the elopement, pursued the party and overtook them. Makaranda stayed behind to meet them, while the others advanced towards the garden to inform Madhava of all that had happened. Madhava started at once to assist his friend. In the confusion that followed, Malati stepped out alone in anxiety to look for her lord. Just at that time, Kapalakundala, who, as we know, had sworn revenge, came and carried Malati away. She had been waiting all along for a fit opportunity to perpetrate her misdeed unobserved by anybody. Such an opportunity had now arrived and she conveyed Malati to a hill known as Sri-parvata 'to tear her to pieces there', as she said. Madhava and Makaranda who had successfully routed the guards were conducted to the king. When he learnt of their prowess

and of their high rank, he, with his usual partiality for merit, pardoned them. When the two youths returned to the garden soon after, they were sorely disappointed not to find Malati there and they immediately set out in search of her.

The first place in which they looked for her was Kamandiki's residence. When they did not find her there, they grew suspicious; and when further search was equally fruitless, they grew desperate and took her for lost. The grief of Madhava knew no bounds. As he was unable to bear the sight of the things associated with Malati, Makaranda took him away to a wood skirting a hill some miles beyond the city, hoping that his friend might find some relief there. But it proved a change from bad to worse. Any and every sight in that pretty wood would unbalance his mind and it needed all the cleverness which Makaranda could command to see that he did not go mad over the loss of his love. One day when Madhava fainted and lay in a death-like swoon, Makaranda, despairing of his recovery and feeling his own life a burden,

made up his mind to drown himself in a river close by. But just at that time, an unfamiliar voice spoke to him asking him to forbear. Makaranda was more than surprised and looking up discovered an ascetic lady before him. She asked whether he was Makaranda and on his answering 'I am that hapless being,' Soudamani—for that was her name—told him that she had news of Malati and showed him the *vakula* garland in support of what she said. Makaranda was overwhelmed with joy, and he dashed at once with Soudamani to where Madhava was lying. Madhava had just recovered his consciousness. They saw him first blaming the god of wind for bringing him back to consciousness from the swoon where he had found an escape from sorrow; and then begging the same god with bowed head and joined hands to waft his life to where Malati was or blow on something of her to him. At that time Soudamani placed the garland in his hands. Madhava was overjoyed and the holy woman told him how she had come by it. Sri-parvata whereto Kapalakundala had carried Malati away was the place where Soudamani

performed penance. On hearing the screamings of Malati, Soudamani went to her help and, after rescuing her from the clutches of Kapalakundala, had hastened to convey the good news knowing that Malati was so dear to her former preceptor, Kamandaki, and to them all. Then suddenly Soudamani with her supernatural power disappeared taking away Madhava with her. Makaranda who was left alone, not knowing what it might be and marvelling at the sport of fate as it seemed to him, resolved to go and report the whole matter to Kamandaki. She and her friends, disgusted with the turn which affairs had taken in spite of their best efforts, had meanwhile repaired to the same wood,—there to fall from some precipice and kill themselves. As Makaranda was relating to them what had happened, there was an unexpected flash of splendour and Madhava appeared with Malati restored to him, thus preventing the wholesale tragedy that would otherwise have been enacted there that day. Soudamani also had accompanied Malati and Madhava; but, hearing on her way that Bhurivasu, grieving

over the loss of his daughter, was about to end his life, had gone thither to prevent that calamity. She had succeeded in turning back the sorrowing minister from his resolve by communicating to him in time the happy news of his daughter's safety. She soon returned to where Kamandaki and the others were with a letter from the king, written in the presence of Nandana. The king, when apprised of everything, had written to Madhava graciously approving of not only his marriage with Malati but also that of Makaranda with Madayantika. Fate proved to be friendly to the two couples in the end; and Love, though it had taken a chequered course, was triumphant at last.

SRI HARSHA

SRI Harsha, the author of the drama *Nagananda*, and also of the two dramas *Ratnavali* and *Priyadarsika*, was the king of Kanouj, and reigned from about A.D. 606 to 648. He was the patron of the great prose-writer Bana, who celebrates him in the *Harshacharita*, and also of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuan-Tsang who is our most valuable source of information on his reign. The question of their actual authorship has been a subject of controversy, not only among modern critics, but also among ancient writers. Mammata in his book on rhetoric called *Kavyaprakasa* refers to Harsha's gift of gold to Bana, and his commentators explain this of one of his plays *Ratnavali*, which was passed off in Harsha's name. But this is contradicted by a tradition. I-Tsing the Chinese pilgrim refers to the dramatisation of the subject of *Nagananda* by King Harsha

and its performance and Damodaragupta who lived under Jayapida of Kashmir (A.D. 779 to 813) mentions the performance of *Ratnavali* ascribed to a king. The ascription of these dramas to Bana has nothing plausible in it, so disparate are the styles of the dramas and Bana's prose works. Sri Harsha must have written them himself. The internal evidence is unquestionably in favour of all the three dramas being the works of the same author. The *Nagananda* was orginally written for performance at a festival of Indra, perhaps in autumn. It is the dramatisation of a Buddhist legend, the self-sacrifice of Jimutavahana, which was told in the *Brihatkatha* and in *Vetalapanchavimsati*, two collections of short stories in Sanskrit.

Kings in ancient India were not only great warriors and rulers, but also great scholars and poets. The only argument raised against Sri Harsha's authorship of these dramas is that poetry is the profession of court poets, and a king could not have found the leisure to indulge in literary works. But we know that even from the time of the *Vedas* the kings of

India had taken active part in literature and in scholarship. In the *Upanishads,* kings were the leaders of philosophical thought. We have also two dramas of a certain king of the West Coast, handed down to us—*Dhananjaya* and *Samvarana*..

NAGANANDA

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

JIMUTAVAHANA—The Prince of the Vidyadharas—Hero.

JIMUTAKETU—The Emperor of the Vidyadharas, and father of Jimutavahana.

VISVAVASU—The Emperor of the Siddhas.

MITRAVASU—The Prince of the Siddhas and son of Visvavasu.

SHANKHACHOODA—A Naga.

GARUDA.

QUEEN OF THE VIDYADHARAS—Mother of Jimutavahana.

MALAYAVATI—Daughter of Visvavasu—Heroine.

MOTHER OF SHANKHACHOODA.

Friends of the Hero, the companions of the Heroine, ascetics in the hermitage, attendants, messengers and others.

NAGANANDA

JIMUTAVAHANA was a young prince of the Vidyadharas, an Order of celestial beings. His father Jimutaketu, the Emperor of the Vidyadharas, ruled over his Empire for a very long time. He enjoyed the pleasures of life in his youth and he succeeded in spreading his name and fame throughout his Empire. When he grew old he retired to a hermitage in the forest to spend his last days in penance and austerities, entrusting the work of administration to his son Jimutavahana. The son, like the father, was able to keep the subjects in ways of virtue and to bring happiness to the good people. He treated his relatives with respect and consideration, so that no one thought of coming up as a rival to the throne. There was peace and security, there was prosperity and plenty. He gave away liberally to the needy. There was no one in the realm who had not his legitimate desires satisfied. He administered the Empire

in response to the wishes of his parents, not on account of ambition. He felt that he had finished his duty to his parents by accomplishing thus much, and that there was nothing more to be done by him in person in the Empire.

He could have sat on a throne of imperial splendour and pomp; he could have commanded even princes to attend on him; he could have enjoyed all the pleasures of life. But he preferred to sit on the ground in front of his parents in the forest; he liked much more to serve his aged parents in the hermitage; he desired to share the austere life of his parents in the forest. A kingdom was only a burden, when his presence did not particularly benefit any one and his absence did no particular harm to the people. He could do some real good to his parents in the hermitage. When he found that his presence in the kingdom was not wanted for peace and security, he placed his chief minister in complete charge of the administration and retired to the forest to serve his aged parents. Youth was the cause of all desires and

was impermanent. That was the time when men would be averse to discriminating between right and wrong. It was entirely subject to the senses. Thus youth was very despicable. Still to Jimutavahana that very youth was a source of great happiness and extreme gratification, as he devoted his youth to the service of his parents.

His friends were trying to persuade him to lead a more comfortable life, befitting his age and position. They were getting weary of this life of self-sacrifice, this life of service with no enjoyment, no pleasures, this life in the solitary forests in the company of his aged parents and a few ascetics. His friends were even getting angry with him. They were wondering how he was not feeling tired even after wasting such a long time in the forests for the sake of his parents who were half dead, whether he would not be pleased to put a stop to that miserable life, to retire from the self-imposed task of attending on his parents, and to enjoy the pleasures of his kingdom to his heart's content. They knew that they could not win him over by appealing to his personal interests.

They tried to persuade him to go back to his kingdom by rousing his sense of duty to the kingdom, which they declared to be exposed to the danger of attack from rival claimants to the throne. But nothing changed him; his only desire was to serve.

After spending a long time in one part of the forest, Jimutaketu found that there was a scarcity of roots and fruits, of fire-wood, grass and flowers, things essential for the penance. So he desired that his son should seek another abode for them. Jimutavahana started with his friends to another part of the forest called the Malaya mountains, where he thought of arranging for the dwelling of his parents. That was a beautiful part of the forest. The gentle wind was very refreshing. The air was fragrant with the scent of sandalwood growing thick and green. The place was made cool by a rumbling brook falling over uneven rocks. Elephants were rubbing their shoulders against sandalwood trees, which discharged fragrant juice. Noices of falling trees and the roar of wild animals were being re-echoed in rocks and caves. The red paints on the

tender feet of the fairy nymphs loitering leisurely in the woods were imprinted on the rocks. The whole environment created a change even in the mind of Jimutavahana. His emotions, till then vigorously repressed, began to be stirred. When he entered the forest, his right eye quivered, an omen denoting an imminent love affair. Jimutavahana was puzzled. Love in that sense was farthest from his heart. His friends were happy that after all there might be a chance of winning him over to a life of pleasure and enjoyment.

The trees were thick. There were columns of smoke rising from neat little cottages. The wild animals were resting in peace in the shades of the trees. Most of the trees had their bark removed for use as robes by the ascetics. There was a small brook in which the water was clear as crystal. Grass and fibre threads thrown away after use by the ascetics lay scattered over the place. The parrots daily accustomed to hearing Vedas recited, were freely repeating Vedic passages. It was evidently a grove where the ascetics were

performing penance. But even a hermitage is not an improbable place for a love romance.

It happened at this time that Visvavasu the Emperor of the Siddhas, another Order of celestial beings, had a daughter named Malayavati. She was a very handsome maiden. She had already passed the age when she ought to have secured a husband; still she was unmarried. She went to a temple dedicated to the Goddess Durga close by the hermitage where Jimutavahana had decided to arrange for the abode of his parents. She was spending her days at the temple praying to the Goddess, trying to please Her by playing on a Veena. Days rolled on. The Goddess was showing no sign of favour. Her companions were getting impatient. But she was firm in her devotion. She was worshipping the Goddess, playing on her Veena as usual, when one day Jimutavahana entered the neighbouring hermitage with his friends looking for a suitable abode for his parents.

The music was enchanting. The deer and the wild animals on hearing the music, stood listening, motionless, with their necks slightly

bent, the half-eaten grass falling off their gently open mouths, with one ear cocked and the eyes half-closed. On hearing this enchanting music Jimutavahana's curiosity was roused. From the gentle strokes of the strings and from the prominence of particular notes, he knew that it must be a woman; he knew also from the sweetness of the notes that it must be a celestial woman. His friends tried to pursuade him to enter the temple. He decided to go to the temple more because of his desire to worship the Goddess than because of the charm of the music. He was afraid that the musician might be someone they should not see. So he decided to wait under a Tamala tree and to listen till she left the temple. Jimutavahana's heart began slowly to show signs of being moved by the charm of the music, and more by the inferred charm of the musician. He was eager to know who the musician could be. He listened with rapt attention. He could overhear the conversation within the temple. From the conversation he found out that the musician was an unmarried maiden. There is no harm

in going into the temple if she is unmarried and if she is only a maiden. He wished to enter the temple and see her. But she might leave the temple on seeing them, through bashfulness. So he decided to wait sometime more, but meanwhile to peep in through some creepers. Within the temple was a maiden of heavenly beauty. She had her companions with her. Her voice was sweet to the ears; but her form was sweeter to the eyes. Who could she be? A Goddess, a Naga Maiden, a Vidyadhara damsel or a Siddha beauty? If she be a heavenly maiden, then the thousand eyes of Indra must have been gratified. If she be a Naga Maiden, then the Nether world in which her face shone lost nothing through the absence of the Moon. If she be a Vidyadhara damsel, then Jimutavahana's own race was raised above all other orders of creation. If she be a Siddha, then the Siddhas were the most famous in the world. Such were the thoughts that passed through the mind of Jimutavahana when he looked at her. His friends were happy that after all, his heart was being touched by love.

From the conversation it transpired that she had already a dream one night, in which the Goddess appeared before her and told her how much she was pleased with her devotion and with her skill, and she assured her that soon she would be united to the Emperor of the Vidyadharas. This was the right time for Jimutavahana, the Emperor of the Vidyadharas to enter the temple, under pretence of worshipping the Goddess. He was hesitating. But all his friends dragged him in. The maiden was startled at the appearance of strangers. She desired to go away. But how could she, a maiden, leave the place without doing honour to the guests? It was her duty as a maiden. The faces of Malayavati and Jimutavahana showed signs of mutual affection. They could not stand in each other's presence; more so was it the case with the maiden. Still she could not completely restrain herself from a stealthy glance at him. They had scarcely time to seat themselves when a young ascetic intervened. It was time for her to return to the hermitage. The time was high noon. They had to part. They

did not know even each other's name, to say nothing of particulars regarding birth, parentage and rank.

Visvavasu, the Emperor of the Siddhas, and father of Malayavati, had already an eye on Jimutavahana. He was anxious to give his daughter in marriage to him. He had heard of the fame of Jimutavahana. He was the crest jewel of the Imperial family of the Vidhyadharas, wise, loved by all, unrivalled in personal charm, rich in valour, learned and at the same time modest, young and virtuous. He was ready to sacrifice his own life to save the life of another. Visvavasu sent his son Mitravasu to Jimutavahana to offer him his daughter's hand.

Meanwhile both Jimutavahana and Malayavati were suffering the pangs of love. There was no place cool enough where she could find peace for her afflicted heart. The grove of sandalwood trees with a pavement of moonstone could give relief to her only if she was suffering from the heat of the sun. Still she had to make some pretence of giving relief to her troubled body. Her friends who knew the

real cause of her affliction knew also that the sight of the grove could only increase her sufferings. Still all of them used to retire to the beautiful grove during the hottest part of the day. They talked of the handsome youth whom they saw in the temple. They knew that he must have fallen in love with her also. But Malayavati was indifferent. Perhaps he was in love with some other maiden. How could one be sure?

Jimutavahana was also full of anxieties. He was always thinking of Malayavati. He did not know who she was, where and how to meet her. What were his prospects with her? As days passed on, he began to show signs of neglect even in his duties; he was less earnest in his service of the aged parents. His friends were noting the change that had come over him. Where was all his boasted courage? Though many moonlit nights were spent, though he used to smell the fragrance of lotus, though he used to enjoy the gentle breeze of the evenings scented with jasmine flowers, though he heard the humming of the bees in lotus ponds, still he did not completely break

down; this was all the strength of heart left in him of which he could boast. He found solace in dreams about her. In his fancy he would see his beloved in the sandalwood grove seated on the pavement of moonstone, sometimes angry with him, sometimes scolding him. One day he wanted to go to the grove so that he could see the place where in his fancy he used to meet his beloved, and thus find solace. He did not know that she was actually in the place. He went straight into the grove with his friends. Malayavati and her companions stealthily retired from the place and concealed themselves behind a tree. Jimutavahana began to describe to his friends how he used to meet her in that grove, how she was angry when he was late, how she used to weep, and how he used to console her. Malayavati was overhearing the whole conversation. He must be describing some one else. None of the incidents narrated by him were known to her. He had not even seen her in that grove. They had met only once, and that was in the temple. She could not be the object of his description. He must be cer-

tainly in love with some one else. She had no hopes. But her companions tried to console her asking her to wait till the end of the story. Perhaps he had seen her in that grove unobserved by them. After narrating various incidents which he had pictured in his dreams of her, Jimutavahana began to paint the likeness of his beloved from his memory on the rock with colours collected from the woods.

It was at this time that Mitravasu went to the hermitage to see Jimutavahana. He was told that Jimutavahana was in the grove and he went to that place. Jimutavahana's friends concealed the picture with some leaves and they welcomed Mitravasu. After formal greetings Mitravasu revealed to Jimutavahana the mission of his journey. Jimutavahana did not know that he was offered the hands of the very maiden for whose sake he was undergoing all those terrible mental pangs. This was a critical moment for Malayavati. What will Jimutavahana say? Will he accept the offer? If he is in love with somebody else, how could he? If she be not the object of his love, what hope had she? Jimutavahana was in a

dilemma. He did not wish to make an unceremonious refusal of an offer coming from such a source; at the same time he could not accept it. He evaded the difficulty with the excuse that his heart was given over to another, that he was not his own master to give his heart away. He meant inwardly that he was in love with some one else, but he wanted Mitravasu to understand that he was serving his parents and as such he was not free to make the choice. Mitravasu promised to speak to Jimutavahana's parents and get their consent.

Jimutavahana's heart was already given over to another. Malayavati did not take it in the sense in which Mitravasu took it. She had no hopes. It was too much for her. She swooned but she was consoled by her friends. She decided to put an end to her life. Why should she live, how could she live after hearing those words, those unmistakable words from the very mouth of Jimutavahana? She wanted to be alone so that she could hang herself from the branch of the tree then and there. She asked her friends to go and see if her brother had gone far, so that she could

retire from the place unnoticed by anyone. Her friends obeyed her, but they feared that she might do something rash in her then state of mind. So they did not go far, but watched from behind the trees. Malayavati took advantage of her supposed loneliness. She put a rope round her neck and she was about to jump down. But the friends of Malayavati raised an alarm. Jimutavahana was ready at hand to save her life. Mutual explanations revealed the true facts. The picture of Malayavati painted by Jimutavahana was enough proof to assure her that he was in love with her and no one else.

Misunderstandings, suspicions, jealousy, fears and anxieties, grief and despondency, all the inevitable preliminaries of a really romantic union of two lovers had vanished and true love had its reward. The marriage was celebrated on a grand scale, in accordance with the rank of the couple. There was much festivity. All the citizens of the two Empires took part in it. Roads and avenues, parks and gardens were thronged by merry crowds. The city was for the time being a virtual

heaven. Sex, caste, rank and position and all such differences were for the time being forgotten.

The marriage of the young couple was not the end of their troubles, nor was it the end of the story. It was really the beginning of the true romance of the life of Jimutavahana. Worldly enjoyments had no charm for him. His love for Malayavati was only an expression on a small scale of the higher love that he felt for the whole world. His love for Malayavati was not the culmination of his love but only the starting point for his higher love to find true expression. The marriage did not give him peace and satisfaction. His soul was still troubled. He was longing to get an opportunity for the really big thing in life. He was able to establish order and peace in his Empire, and to that extent he had satisfaction. He was able to alleviate the misery of his parents in their old age, and to that extent his services gave him peace. He was able to respond to the love of Malayavati and to that extent it was a solace to him. Still there was sorrow in the world. That troubled his heart.

He was longing for an opportunity to serve the whole world, to do the big thing in life by which sorrow could be wiped off from the world.

There was trouble in his Empire as a result of his continued absence. Mitravasu reported to him soon after the marriage that his Kingdom was being attacked by a rival to the throne and that the whole host of the Siddhas in the Empire of his father Visvavasu was ready to resist and attack. Was it worth while to cause so much loss of life in a battle simply to retain his claims to the throne? His ambition was to help and to serve. War is cruelty. He was prepared to sacrifice his body unsolicited for the sake of others. How could he be a party to perpetrate cruelty for the sake of a throne? Suffering in the world was his only enemy. He saw no enemies anywhere else. He wanted to persuade Mitravasu to withdraw from the battle. But Mitravasu was not the person to listen to a sermon on mercy and self-sacrifice. So Jimutavahana arranged that they should talk over the matter further and thus

he postponed the decision for the time being.

Jimutavahana was in a meditative mood. His choice was between the hermitage and the royal throne. He was by claim of descent the Emperor of the Vidyadharas. He was the son-in-law of the Emperor of the Siddhas. His Kingdom was secure, he had only to return to the Kingdom. He could have all the pleasures of life, all the pomp of an Empire, all the splendour of royalty. He was happily wedded. There was nothing to make him unhappy. His friends wondered how he could be unhappy. The throne had no charms for him. A wilderness promised him more happiness: there was the soft lawn to sleep on; rocks to sit on; cool shades of trees to live under; refreshing waters of fast torrents to drink; fresh roots and fruits to eat; wild animals for company. Thus without any effort he could have all the luxury and pleasures in the forest. There was only one thing wanting. The place was inaccessible to the needy and to the poor; thus there was no opportunity for helping.

Jimutuvahana and Mitravasu met on the mountains overlooking the sea. In front of them Jimutavahana saw the valleys of the Mountains white in colour. He had heard that the valleys of the Malaya mountains were white in colour. But Mitravasu told him that the white colour that he saw in front was due to the heaps of bones of Nagas killed in that place. Jimutavahana was very much touched at the sight. Certainly numbers of Nagas must have been killed in that place. What could the occasion be for such a terrible cruelty? Mitravasu told him that they all did not die together. Then he narrated the gruesome tale.

Garuda, the King of birds, was the born enemy of the Nagas. He began to attack them in their native land and eat them up. The King of the Nagas was afraid that the entire race of the Nagas might be exterminated by the powerful and irresistible enemy. He came to an agreement with Garuda. Jimutavahana was shocked to hear that the King did not offer himself up to Garuda to be eaten up by him so that the Nagas could be saved.

'What else is a King for? But the tale was otherwise. The very sight of Garuda was a danger to the expectant mothers among the Nagas and his very name was enough to frighten infants to death. If the entire Nagas were thus exterminated, then the self-interest of Garuda himself would be affected. Let Garuda be satisfied with one Naga every day.' The King undertook to send a Naga every day to the sea-shore, where Garuda could eat. The offer was accepted. According to this arrangement Garuda was eating a Naga every day in that very place, and as years rolled on the bones of these unhappy Nagas formed into an immense white heap.

Jimutavahana was very much overcome with pity and anger at this tale. The King of the Nagas has two thousand tongues. Was there not one tongue at least among them that could say, "devour me to-day so that I can save the life of one of my unfortunate subjects." Is this what is meant by the protection offered to the subjects by the King? How much sin people are ready to commit merely for the sake of one's body which is the

abode of all sorts of impurities, which does one little good in return and which is perishable? Is there no end to this tragic destruction of the Nagas? Jimutavahana wished so much that by giving up his body he could save the life of one Naga at least.

At this time Mitravasu was summoned by his father on urgent business. Mitravasu warned Jimutavahana not to stay long in that place which was exposed to all kinds of dangers. Jimutavahana was left alone. He descended from the mountain to the sea-shore. Proceeding a little he heard a pitiable cry. He could understand that it was the wailing of a bereaved mother. He could distinctly hear the words, "Son, how can I look on you when you will be killed?" Jimutavahana turned his steps in the direction from which the sound was heard. He wanted to know who it was, and what the cause of the distress could be. He came in sight of an elderly woman accompanied by her young son. His name was Shankhachooda. They belonged to the Naga race. To the mother the whole land of the Nagas would be immersed in darkness without the

face of her son to light up the place. Garuda, the heartless Garuda would swallow up his body. His body was very tender ; it had not even been exposed to the rays of the sun till then. The Officer of the Naga King was there to see that one of the Nagas presented himself on the sea-shore to be eaten up by Garuda. He was getting impatient. The time for the approach of Garuda was nearing. The aged mother deluded by her fondness for the son did not understand the gravity of the king's command. He was urging Shankhachooda to proceed. The son was very cheerful, he knew that he was sacrificing his life to do his duty to his race. He was trying to console the unhappy mother.

Jimutavahana was witnessing the whole scene. He stood concealed behind a tree. He did not wish to go and intrude. He knew that the cause of the mother's woe would be clear from the conversation which he could well overhear. He would intervene when the moment came. The scene was really touching. The heart of even the King's Officer was moved to pity. He was doing his part not

because he liked it, but because it was the command of his master. He offered a scarlet robe to Shankhachooda, which he was to put on as an emblem of death and to await Garuda on a rock. From the scarlet robes Garuda would recognise him as his prey for the day. Shankhachooda took the robes from the Officer. The scarlet colour gave additional anxiety to the old mother. It was the colour of death. The fatal hour was fast approaching. The mother would not leave the son. The Officer was impatient and was urging him. The son was calm and prepared for the fate. He was trying to console her. The mother was wailing.

Jimutavahana was observing all that was taking place. He pitied the honest young Naga so mercilessly thrown away by the King. He was surprised at the cruelty of Garuda. How could he take away from the mother's lap that handsome youth and eat him up in her very presence, showing no mercy at all? His mother half senseless, shedding streams of tears, wailing in pity, finding no way of saving her son, casting her looks all

around in desperate sorrow, if from such a mother Garuda can snatch away her dear son to kill him and swallow him, it must be his heart and not his beak that was made of steel. If Jimutavahana could not save his life with his own body, when he was in that pitiable condition when his death was fast approaching, when he was discarded even by his relatives, of what purpose was his body to him?

The mother was cursing and reproaching Providence. How could she have consolation? He was her only son, and still the Naga King did not spare him. The world is wide; still Providence could not find a substitute for him, her son alone was remembered. It was impossible to be firm of heart in such a condition. The King of the Nagas, the very person who was to save every Naga, he himself had cast away her only son. Who else could save him? When Jimutavahana heard these words, he could bear it no longer. He revealed himself saying, "Here I am". The aged mother thought it must be Garuda. She offered her own body if that could save her

son. Shankhachooda assured her that he was not Garuda. In her anxiety, she saw only Garuda everywhere. Jimutavahana told her that he was a Vidyadhara come to save her son. He had no time for words. He wanted to show his friendship by actual deeds. He wanted to take over the scarlet robes on his own body so that when Garuda would come he could offer his own body to him and thus save her son. But she was a mother. Jimutavahana's death was as painful to her as that of her own son. Perhaps it was more, since he came unsolicited to save her son by offering his own life, when her son was discarded by her own relatives. This self-sacrifice was really wonderful. Viswamitra, a sage, ate the flesh of a dog like a chandala; Gautama, another sage, killed and ate the bird Nadijangha, who had even rendered some help to the sage; Garuda, the son of the sage Kashyapa, was eating the Nagas; all this cruelty was perpetrated for protecting one's own body; and there was a *youth* who placed his life at the disposal of a stranger to save him from death. Shankhachooda would not accept

the offer. The offer showed beyond doubt that Jimutavahana was a friend. If either of them should die, it were better that Shankhachooda should die; such ordinary creatures as he are born and perish every day. But it is rarely that a magnanimous soul like Jimutavahana is born.

Though thus dissuaded by both the mother and the son, Jimutavahana persisted in his resolve to save the young son. He had been looking for an opportunity, and when the opportunity came to be of service, it were unfair that he should he deprived of it. He even fell at the feet of the mother to be allowed to die instead of her dear son. But Shankhachooda too was proud of his race. He was born among the Nagas. If he saved his own life through the death of such a great soul, that would be a shame not only to him but to the whole Naga race. The only favour he would ask was that when he was dead his mother's life might be protected by Jimutavahana. But Jimutavahana asked him how any one could possibly save her life when he was dead. She would live only if he lived; she would die

when he was gone. Only Shankhachooda could save her life, not Jimutavahana. The only way to save her life was by handing over the emblem of death to him without delay. But Shankhachooda was equally firm in his resolve that no action of his should stain the fame of the Naga race. He could not be intimidated into doing anything that was cowardly or ignoble. It was nearly time for Garuda to approach. His final prayer was that in all his future births he might be born as her son. He fell at the feet of his mother. The mother knew that there was no chance for her son to be saved. She too was ready to die with him. Both retired into a temple for worship for the last time in that life.

It was the greatest disappointment to Jimutavahana. He began to think of a plan for saving the life of the young Naga. How could he retain his body when he was compelled to see another person losing his life in his very presence, and that when his body could as well serve the purpose as the other person's? Garuda wanted only food. He was not particular about the body of Shankha-

chooda. Here was a real opportunity to serve a great cause. How could he miss it? No. He was determined to save the life of the young Naga by offering his body to Garuda. He must find out a plan. At that time a messenger from Malayavati went there with a pair of scarlet silk robes for him to wear, as was the custom after marriage. This was in the estimation of Jimutavahana the most valuable reward of his marriage with Malayavati. He could cover himself up with those scarlet robes and place himself up on the rock of death. Garuda would take him away mistaking him to be a Naga. Shankhachooda and the mother were sure to be late. He could see Garuda actually approaching. There was a terrible blast of wind which shook even the peaks of the Malaya mountains. Garuda was in view. The wings resembling the clouds at the time of the destruction of the world covered the entire sky. The waves of the ocean began to rise up on account of the wind set up by the wings, and to beat against the shore threatening to immerse the whole world. The entire world

was tinged by the purple, shining body of Garuda.

That was the happiest moment in the life of Jimutavahana. He stood on the rock of death. The touch of that rock gave him more pleasure than the touch even of Malayavati. Standing on that rock he felt far greater happiness than he had ever enjoyed lying on the lap of his dear mother as an infant. Garuda actually came. Jimutavahana stood firm on the rock with his body covered with the scarlet robes. His last prayer was that just in that particular birth he was able to save the life of the Naga youth by sacrificing his own body, so in all his future births his body might be for the help of the others.

Garuda descended. He knew that the person below, whom he was to eat off soon, stood there to save the Nagas. But he did not know that in that particular case the person standing there was literally to save the entire race of the Nagas. He picked up his prey as usual and rose up in the sky. But there were unusual omens indicating auspicious results.

Flowers fell from the sky like rain. There was the sound of drums. Garuda could not understand the cause of these auspicious omens. He thought that the blast of wind set up by his wings must have shaken the trees in the celestial gardens and that it must have caused the clouds to clash against each other.

In the home of Jimutavahana all was anxiety. He had not returned although it was getting late. The delay was causing anxiety to his people. There was his newly wedded wife. There were her brother and parents. His own parents were also waiting for him. Even when Jimutavahana loitered in the garden close by the house alone, his people were anxious that some danger might befall him. Now he was alone in the mountains over-looking the sea, exposed to various dangers. His people were reasonably anxious about his safety. Envoys were sent out to get some news of him. He had not returned to his father. He had not returned to his father-in-law. Jimutavahana's newly wedded wife and his parents were waiting for him, entertaining anxious fears about his safety. Their anxiety

was increased when an envoy reported that he had not returned to the father-in-law. There were bad omens also.

A jewel fell in front of them at that moment. Its rays dazzled their eyes. It was a crest jewel. There were pieces of hair and blood and flesh sticking to it. Could it be the crest jewel of Jimutavahana? Flesh and blood sticking to it suggested that the owner of it must have been killed and devoured by some beast or bird. They tried to console themselves with the idea that it might be the jewel of one of the Nagas who were being killed by Garuda every day. People had very often seen such jewels falling from the sky like meteors. They thought that Jimutavahana must have returned to the father-in-law. Messengers were going from the father-in-law to the father and back again. But he was not returning. How could he?

Shankhachooda and his mother finished their prayer and returned to the place where Shankhachooda was to await Garuda. But Garuda had already come and gone with his prey. The young Vidyadhara had baffled

him. It was a source of extreme grief to him. That youth was an unsolicited friend to him. He was the very incarnation of mercy. To him sorrow meant only the sorrow of others. What had that reckless youth done? Shankhachooda was deprived of the honour of giving up his life for the sake of the Nagas. He could not carry out the command of the King. What a shame that a stranger lost his life to save a Naga. He was not prepared to return home carrying such a shame with him. He would follow up his deliverer. There were drops of blood fallen from the body of the Vidyadhara in a line. He could trace it up to reach his deliverer. He proceeded a little and then he came to the place where Jimutavahana's parents and Malayavati were awaiting anxiously the return of Jimutavahana. Shankhachooda was shouting in despair, "Where can I find, where can I find?" They thought that he must be searching for the jewel that fell in front of them. But he was searching for a much more valuable jewel than that stone. It was not Shankhachooda's crest jewel that was lost but the crest jewel of the entire creation

that was taken away from the world ; that was what he was looking for. .

He narrated the whole story to the parents, how he was to have been eaten up by Garuda that day, how before his arrival a young Vidyadhara offered himself to Garuda in his stead and was carried away by him. There was no other Vidyadhara capable of doing such an act of self-sacrifice. Jimutavahana must have been killed by Garuda and the jewel that they got must have fallen from him when he was being snatched away. The grief was too much for the aged parents and for Malayavati. They all fell down senseless. He had the misfortune to cause the death of of the young Vidyadhara and also to report the sad news to his very parents. What more ungrateful thing could he do in return for saving his life ? Is he to take away his life at once ? No. He must try to console the parents. They were determined to end their lives in fire. They had to prepare the fire from the sacred fire. How could Shankhachooda bear this terrible sight ? The young Vidyadhara, his newly wedded wife,

his aged parents, all were to lose their lives on his account. There was a possibility that Garuda finding him to be not a Naga might not kill Jimutavahana. In that case all these lives could be saved and he could do his duty to his race and to his king, by offering himself to Garuda as his legitimate prey. It was worth while to proceed and search for the place where Garuda could be. The others consented to wait before taking the final step. They also agreed to follow him up; but they must take the sacred fire with them so that in case Jimutavahana was not alive they could perish themselves in the fire. He started in advance: they promised to follow him with the sacred fire. Perhaps through the favour of the Gods Jimutavahana might still be alive!

Shankhachooda hastened, tracing the line of blood that had fallen from the body of Jimutavahana. After proceeding a little he could see far in front of him the great Garuda perching on a peak of the mountain. He was whetting his beak on the rocks, thus smearing the rocks with blood. The whole surroundings were illuminated with the lustre of his

eyes. He was thrusting his claws into the bosom of Jimutavahana, claws hard as diamond.

Garuda on his part was full of wonder. He had been eating Nagas after Nagas ever since he was born. But such a wonder as on that day he had never experienced. His prey was showing no signs of pain, though he was tearing his body mercilessly. On the other hand he was looking gratified. He must be an ocean of bravery. Even though his blood was being sucked out in profusion he showed no sign of fatigue. When pieces of flesh were being plucked out from his body he endured the pain with a look of joy. With gratitude he looked on Garuda who was killing him as though he was saving him. Garuda's wonder was roused. He decided not to eat up his prey any more. He wished to know who he could be. Jimutavahana did not know why Garuda suddenly stopped eating. There was still enough blood in his body. There was still enough flesh. Garuda's look did not show that his hunger was satisfied. He asked Garuda why he would not eat more.

Garuda's wonder increased hundredfold that even in that condition he should speak so bold and firm. Then Garuda said: "I have sucked out with my beak only the blood from your heart; but with your courage you have been able to pluck out the very heart from me. I wish to know who you are." Jimutavahana said, "Your hunger is not yet satisfied; you are not in a mood to listen. First satisfy your hunger and thirst with my flesh and blood."

It was at this stage that Shankachooda rushed up to Garuda shouting, "Do not do anything rash. He is not a Naga. Leave him off. You must eat me. I am the Naga whom our King has deputed as your prey for this day." Jimutavahana was very sorry that even at that stage his plans of saving the life of the young Naga was frustrated. Garuda looked on the one and then on the other. Both had the emblem of death, the scarlet robes. Who could be the Naga? He did not know. Shankachooda told him that he alone bore the features of a Naga. Garuda was satisfied that he made a mistake. Then who could this youth be, whom he had half killed? Shankachooda

told him that he was a young Vidyadhara, the jewel of the whole race of the Vidyadharas, an incarnation of mercy. Thus Garuda knew that he must be Jimutavahana, the prince of the Vidyadharas whose fame he had heard being sung by the Charanas in the regions of Meru, in the caves of the Mandara mountain, in the valleys of the Himavan, on the tops of the Malaya mountains, and indeed in all places. Garuda felt that he had dragged himself into the mire of ill-fame by this mistake. There was a youth who offered his life to save another life, and the other person has come of his own accord to be eaten by Garuda as his legitimate prey. Garuda had done a great wrong. The young Vidyadhara must be a Bodhisattva, and he had killed him. The only way in which he could save his soul from that sin was by sacrificing his life in fire.

Jimutavahana's parents and Malayavati, following the footsteps of Shankhachooda reached the place. Jimutavahana did not want his parents to see his mutilated body. That would give them pain. He covered himself up with a cloth and asked Shankhachooda to

support him. Even in that condition, Jimutavahana was thinking of how he could avoid pain to his parents. When he was being carried away by Garuda, he remembered his parents and threw his crest jewel in front of them. But this is the tragedy of all great souls. In order to save the life of one individual—the life of the young Naga from Garuda by sacrificing his own body—he endangered the lives of many—of his wife, parents and others. He did not stop to consider whether he should save one life or many lives. But that is the natural course which mercy takes. Mercy does not distinguish between others and oneself. Jimutavahana was born to serve. It ought to have been a matter of joy and pride to his parents and to his wife that Jimutavahana sacrificed his life for saving the life of a stranger, and it should not have been an occasion for grief or reproach. But they were not able to rise up to his high ideals of self-sacrifice and duty, and they cared only for themselves. They reproached Jimutavahana when he had to leave them, though it was to fulfil

his purpose in life that he had to leave them. Garuda could not in shame wait till the parents reached the place, though they had fire with them in which he could have perished. He wanted to create fire from the ocean. But Jimutavahana stopped him saying that that was not the way to absolve himself from the sin. Garuda prostrated before him and asked him what he should do. But Jimutavahana requested him to wait till he had done homage to his parents. The parents were so much gratified that not only was their son alive but that Garuda was prostrating before him. They hoped to meet him with his body unhurt. But when Jimutavahana tried to rise up, he reeled. The parents and Malayavati swooned when they saw Jimutavahana in that condition. Shankhachooda tried to console them. Shankhachooda even cursed his very birth. At every step there was misfortune and he was the cause of all that misfortune.

Garuda for his part felt that all this misfortune happened on account of his cruelty. He tried to fan Jimutavahana with his wings, and thus to bring him back to

consciousness. Jimutavahana's only anxiety was about his parents. How could he console them ? Shankhachooda was trying to console everybody. The parents were in turn despondent and hopeful. The mother was cursing Garuda for mutilating the beautiful body of her son But to Jimutavahana there was no beauty in the physical body, which was made of flesh, blood and other things. Garuda was all repentence. He wanted to know from Jimutavahana what he should do to absolve himself of his sins. Jimutavahana gave him the sublime teaching: "Always desist from doing injury to life. Feel repentence for past sins. Bring together various currents of virtuous deeds, by offering protection to living beings. If you plunge yourself into that current, no sin can stain you. Compared to this mighty current, the sin of having destroyed a few lives is nothing, just as a piece of salt cannot spoil a huge lake."

Garuda said: "I was awakened by you from my sleep of ignorance. From this day onwards I desist from all injury to life. The Nagas can hereafter roam about freely without

any fear from me. May the Naga damsels wander about unmolested in sandalwood forests and sing merrily your own fame."

Jimutavahana congratulated Garuda. He wished Shankhachooda to return home immediately to console his mother who must be thinking that he was eaten up by Garuda.

Till then Jimutavahana was drinking the nectar of service in the cause of others, and he did not feel his own physical pain, though his body had been frightfully wounded by Garuda. Now that he had fulfilled his mission, he began to feel the pain. He was expiring. The parents and Malayavati were crying bitterly. Shankhachooda was full of grief. "With his death the world will be without a Master. After his death bravery would have no abode. Where could modesty find a habitation? Who would be able to bear his patience? Self-sacrifice would be gone for ever. Truth would be destroyed. Mercy would no more be found. The whole world would become a void."

And Jimutavahana was dead. What could Garuda do? The mother was praying to the

guardians of the world to sprinkle nectar from Heaven to revive her son. This word nectar reminded Garuda of what he could accomplish at that critical moment. It was in his power even at that hour to wipe away the whole shame. He would fly to heaven and pray to Indra to grant him some nectar. Perhaps Indra might not grant the request. Why, he could go and get it by force from heaven. He could save not only the life of Jimutavahana but also of all the Nagas that he had killed till then. With this resolve Garuda flew away.

The father and the mother, Malayavati and Shankhachooda were ready to follow up the path of Jimutavahana. Shankhachooda made a huge pyre and lighted it up. Why should they live? There was the young Jimutavahana who left the world without adorning the Imperial throne of the Vidyadharas. Malayavati offered her prayers to the Goddess. The Goddess had promised her that she would become the consort of the Emperor of Vidyadharas; but in the case of that unfortunate maiden, even the Goddess spoke an untruth.

At the critical moment when Jimutavahana was lying dead, when his parents, Malayavati and Shankachooda were about to jump into the huge fire which they had got already, the Goddess herself hearing the pitiable cry of the maiden, made her appearance at the scene. How could the Goddess speak an untruth? She sprinkled a little water over Jimutavahana uttering the words, "I am pleased with you who could help the world even with your life. Return to a life of glory and light." All prostrated at the feet of the Goddess.

In the meanwhile Garuda went to heaven, took the nectar by force and sprinkled it on the whole world. All the Nagas who had died before were revived. The Goddess herself crowned Jimutavahana, who was one of the Bodhisattvas, as Emperor of the Vidyadharas.

RATNAVALI

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

UDAYANA—The King of the Vatsas.

YAUGANDHARAYANA—The Chief Minister of Udayana.

RUMANVAN—The Second Minister of Udayana.

BABHRAVYA—An Officer in the court of Udayana.

VIJAYAVARMAN—The nephew of Rumanvan.

VASANTAKA—The friend of Udayana.

VIKRAMABAHU—The King of Ceylon.

VASUBHUTI—The Chief Minister of Vikramabahu.

VASAVADATTA—The Queen of the Vatsas.

RATNAVALI—Daughter of Vikramabahu.

KANCHANAMALA— } Maids of Vasavadatta.
SUSANGATA— }

SAGARIKA—Ratnavali in disguise.

RATNAVALI

HUNDREDS of years ago there ruled over the country of the Vatsas a King named Udayana. He married Vasavadatta, the daughter of the King of Ujjain, a princess of such extraordinary beauty that struck pale even the moon in the eastern sky. Being a cultured lady well acquainted with kingly duties, she proved a real helpmate to her husband, and as time rolled on, became his friend and guide.

The King was also assisted by a body of ministers headed by Yaugandharayana, who was eminently fitted for the place by his learning, character and devotion to God, Crown and Country. Under their guidance the king vanquished his enemies and did everything conducive to the welfare of his subjects. During his reign the people enjoyed all the fruits of a good government such as peace, plenty, security of person and property, and immunity from ills of all kinds.

One day news reached the ears of the Chief Minister that a sage had predicted that he who married Ratnavali, the daughter of Vikramabahu, the King of Ceylon, would become an emperor. Naturally, therefore, his desire to win increasing glory for the king impelled him to secure the princess for the king. Without the king's knowledge he sent messengers to Vikramabahu requesting his daughter's hand for king Udayana. They reached the island safely and on their arrival were warmly received and hospitably treated. In due course they informed the king of their mission. The king told them that, much as he might wish for a direct alliance with King Udayana for whose qualities of head and heart he had nothing but the greatest admiration, he did not like to give his daughter as a second wife and thereby incur the displeasure of the chief queen who was none other than his own sister's daughter.

The King's reply was duly conveyed to the Chief Minister, but he was not in the least dismayed, though it would have sorely disappointed one with less ingenuity. He soon

hit upon a plan to achieve his cherished object. After the lapse of a few months, he sent a responsible officer of the court named Babhravya with the message that, while Udayana had gone a hunting, his tent set up near the village of Lavanaka caught fire, that Vasavadatta was there unfortunately burnt to ashes, and that he might therefore freely consent to his daughter's marriage with the king. Vikramabahu was shocked to hear of the death of his niece. However, when time had blunted the edge of his grief, the king gladly agreed to the proposed marriage, that he might keep up the old relation with the king impaired by the death of his niece. So he arranged to send the princess Ratnavali and his own minister Vasubhuti with Babhravya. On an auspicious day they set sail for Kausambi, the capital city of the Vatsas. At the time of her departure the king presented her with a fine necklace of sparkling gems befitting her name.

Many months passed and yet the chief minister had no news of Babhravya.

One day, a leading merchant of Kausambi sought an interview with the Prime Minister

and told him how during his return voyage from Ceylon he had rescued a girl found clinging to a spar. She was then almost exhausted, and, but for his help, she would have been drowned and gobbled up by some sea-monster. The girl was then brought and left in his charge. The minister could scarce believe her to be human ; so angelic were her looks and so refined her manners. So lustrous also was her beauty that her necklace served only as a foil for it. The minister named her Sagarika and entrusted her to the kind care of Vasavadatta, hoping that the king would chance to cast a glance at this young lady (born of a king, perhaps as he thought) during his] frequent visit to the harem. But the jealous queen who knew well the ways of her royal husband, kept her out completely from his sight.

Then came the smiling spring, when animals and plants began to glow with new life. The cool gentle breeze from the south gladdened the hearts of people, and made trees put forth fresh and tender leaves. The jasmine creeper wound itself round the trunk of the mango

tree and cheered lovers by its abundant output of flowers. A hearty welcome was accorded to this returning spring and the festival of the Indian Cupid was celebrated all over the country.

At Kausambi also, arrangements were made on a grand scale for its celebration. Men and women of all ranks participated in the function, which provided an occasion for the lower orders of the society for excessive drinking, ribaldry and tumultuous merry-making. The people roamed about showing off their fineries. Of singing, dancing and playing upon the several musical instruments there was plenty, besides the usual blowing of pipes and the beating of drums. The red powder and the red liquid so characteristic of the festival were respectively thrown and squirted out from syringes at each other's heads. Some falling on the road, they formed a paste under the feet of the devotees and the streets of the city looked like the dusty road of our modern towns after a slight drizzle.

The queen for her part arranged to conduct the merry festivities in the Makaranda Grove.

She sent words to her Lord to be present there on the occasion and moved to the grove with her maid and Sagarika. On reaching the place of worship, she regretted that she had allowed her new charge to come out of her seclusion. Scolding her for having left Sarika, a favourite bird of hers uncared for at that time of wanton drunkenness and grievous disorder, she ordered her back to the palace.

Sagarika who had seen the worship of Madana in her father's palace came to the garden to observe how it was conducted by the queen. Disappointed in that hope, but happily recollecting that the bird was under the safe custody of her dear friend Susangata, she resolved to gratify her curiosity remaining unnoticed. Finding, however, that it would take sometime for the *puja* to begin, she thought that she might meanwhile fetch some flowers to worship Him. But she got too absorbed in the pleasant task to note the quick lapse of time. So on her return she found to her disappointment that the *puja* was half done. But there was a pleasant surprise for her. She found Cupid

himself in flesh and blood worshipped by the queen in the place of a mere picture used in her own native land! All unconscious that this Cupid was none other than the king, she offered him the flowers and prayed for his blessings. For a long time she stood rooted to the spot feasting her eyes on his beauty.

The day was far advanced and then was heard the sound of the town-crier that many kings were waiting at the palace to take leave of King Udayana. When Sagarika heard the name Udayana, she was taken by surprise and exclaimed within herself: "Is this Cupid Udayana himself to whom my father consented to offer me? Oh, how I swell at the sight of the king!"

Hearing the cry, the king and the queen started for the palace, while Sagarika stood weeping over the cruel fate that so soon robbed her of the sight of the king.

She returned to the palace, but she could not attend to her duties; the form of the king as she saw him in the Makaranda Grove stood constantly before her eyes. She had

no taste for food. She did not like to talk even to her fellow-maids. Not a wink of sleep could she get, but simply lay tossing restlessly in her bed of pain. She got up at the first streak of dawn, and once again leaving the bird to the care of her friend Susangata, stole to the plantain grove with a board, pencil, brush and paints. On her way, she passed by a servant of the queen named Nipunika who was sent by her to see if the creeper planted by the king had yielded the expected profusion of flowers. Taking her seat in a convenient place in the grove, Sagarika said to herself: "Oh, my heart, be still. Why yearn after what is beyond your reach? Why so much longing to see him, when it only aggravates your pain? Why desert me now? Having been wholly mine from my birth, you now run after the king, whom you saw only yesterday. Oh, Cupid! Is it not enough glory to have vanquished the Gods in the celestial regions? Is it manly on your part to afflict me, a poor innocent weakling? That is why, perhaps, you have lost your body. Anyway I see no reason to continue my existence. This place is not fre-

quented by people. This much will I do. Let me sit here and draw a portrait of the king. Let me have a full taste of its sweets before I kill myself." Quickly did she set to work and in a few hours she completed the picture.

Susangata who was expecting in vain the return of Sagarika set out in search of her with the cage in her hand. She met Nipunika on the way and learning from her the whereabouts of her friend, directed her steps to the grove. There she found her absorbed in drawing a portrait. She looked at it from behind her and started on seeing the king himself painted. Then she exclaimed, "Well done, Sagarika. Truly a celestial swan will choose only a lotus tank to live in." Sagarika was surprised and turning round she saw only her friend whom she entreated to sit by her side.

Susangata: "Whom have you drawn here?"

Sagarika: "Only Madana, who is being worshipped in this festival."

Susangata: "Well done indeed. Only let me paint Rati by his side."

Forthwith she drew the picture of Sagarika by the side of king.

Sagarika: (angrily) "Whom have you painted here?"

Susangata: "Prithee, be not angry. I have only drawn a Rati for your Madana. Why do you hide the truth from me? Confess freely."

Now Sagarika felt sure that her love for the king had been discovered. So she unburdened herself to Susangata, but earnestly besought her to keep it confidential. She replied, "Don't be nervous. It is but proper that such a gem of a woman should fall in love with such a king. I will keep your love a secret, but I fear that this silly bird which is very proud of its skill to repeat the words uttered by others will betray you."

Sagarika: "I am all the more anxious."

Susangata: "It cannot be helped, but, console yourself. Let me bring lotus-stalk and leaves."

Sagarika: "Fetch them soon."

When she returned with them, Sagarika said, "Why should I worry myself thus? What a fool I am to love the king, being in

the service, of the queen? Does it not spell disgrace to me? Why not free myself from this predicament by death?" Before Susangata could reply, their attention was distracted by a cry that a monkey breaking loose from the king's stable was running about in the palace pursued by the grooms. The two ladies became thoroughly frightened when the monkey came scampering towards them. So they took to flight leaving behind them the board and the cage, and hid themselves in a bower. Thus safely ensconced their only anxiety was for the safety of the bird. But they were somewhat relieved when they found that the bird had escaped and the monkey was feasting on the delicious viands in the cage. They had but to recapture it. So they sped after the bird.

Now appeared in the garden the king himself listening to Vasantaka's description of the plenteous bloom that the horticulturist had coaxed out of the creeper by his expert methods. He was proceeding to see for himself the much extolled yield, when his attention was arrested by the voice of

Sarika repeating, word for word, the conversation between Sagarika and Susangata.

Intently listening to it, he learnt that a certain beautiful lady had lost her heart to one and that despairing of gaining his love was about to commit suicide. Vasantaka now plied the king with good raillery to confess that he was himself the fortunate Madana sought for by the love-sick lady of Sarika's narration. As he said this, he was so highly diverted at the notion that he had caught at the truth that he burst into such an uncontrollable fit of laughter that the truant bird got thoroughly frightened, and flew off as fast as wings could carry. The monarch calling Vasantaka to follow, panted after the bird to hear what more it had to say. Their eager quest brought them to the plantain grove in whose cool shade they planned for themselves a short respite to get back their breath.

When Vasantaka had sufficiently rested himself, he began to wander about the garden. He came across the open cage of Sarika and a board whereon were painted his friend the

King and a charming damsel. Delighted that his surmise had proved correct, he snatched the board and danced into the king's presence saying: "Who is this Madana but yourself?" Looking at the portrait, the monarch got lost in the charms of the lady whose loveliness, he thought, outshone that of the full moon.

Just then, Sagarika and Susangata, after a fruitless pursuit of Sarika returned to secure at least the drawing board, lest it should fall into the hands of some one else. As they approached their seats in the grove, they heard human voices. So they stayed and hiding themselves behind the trees, listened to the conversation between the king and his friend. Vasantaka was asking the king if he was pleased with the lady in the picture, to which the king truthfully replied and unconsciously made Sagarika thrill with pleasure to hear that her beauties had engrossed his whole being.

Thereupon Vasantaka showed the king the bed of lotus leaves and the rings of lotus stalk used by the lady to soothe the agony of her burning love for him. The king was fondly

handling the lotus stalk, when Susangata revealed herself to the king. In great surprise the monarch asked her how she came to be there in reply to which she averred that she knew not only his whereabouts but also the drawing board affair.

Becoming greatly concerned at the possibility of this impudent lady betraying him to his queen, he earnestly importuned her to keep his love affair a secret, and be gratified with the rich presents he offered her on the spot. But the saucy maid would have none of it. She preferred first to pacify her dear friend Sagarika, who was near by and who was wild with anger at her having been painted as Rati by the Madana of her heart. The King felt that it was the proper time for him to plead his cause, which was hers too, before her.

But the timid maid pretended to take alarm and stood frigid before his advance. Knowing well that women like to be wooed before being won, he began pouring forth his praises of her, described her beauty as angelic, fondly protested that such rare gem had never before been seen on earth, declared that even the

Creator should have been astounded at His own handiwork and wound up by saying that her apparent forbidding looks were only indicative of the great tumult of love within.

" If so, why not gather up the treasure in your arm?", was the bright suggestion of Susangata. It came timely for him and happy Udayana threw his arms round her neck. As Sagarika struggled hard to slip out of his embrace, Vasantaka cried out, "What, here is another Vasavadatta." On hearing the terrific name of the Queen, the King released her whereupon Sagarika and Susangata walked away from the spot.

The king looked about, but finding no Vasavadatta, he enquired of Vasantaka where she was. He replied that he did not mention anything of the queen being thereabout, but only suggested that Sagarika was as ill-tempered as the queen. The king of course, was in the greatest grief at thus having mistakenly allowed Sagarika to go away and keenly regretted why there should always be many a slip between the cup and the lip.

But Vasantaka's words proved true, for by chance at that moment there arrived Vasavadatta herself to see how the new horticultural methods had affected the king's creeper. Happy to see her royal lord there, she asked him if he had seen it. The king said, "No, I have not. How could I think of enjoying the welcome sight except in your happy company"? Such a skilful reply so delighted Vasantaka that in pure joy he leaped high into the air. Down fell the board hidden in his garments, which sadly spoiled the game. The queen found Sagarika portrayed by the side of her lord and asked him how it came about. The evasive reply of Vasantaka that the king's picture was but his own fruitless attempt bettered by the king provoked the pertinent question as to who painted the lady. The prevaricating reply of the king that it was simply drawn from imagination and her maid's attempt to explain it away as a case of chance correspondence, only nettled her the more and she turned for the palace in high dudgeon, complaining, however, of headache.

Soon the king returned to his chamber and was confined to his bed. The news spread that the king had an attack of fever, but no one, not even the queen, could guess the cause of this sudden rise in temperature. Vasantaka knew that his love for Sagarika was the only cause of his affliction. So he approached Susangata to whom the queen had lately entrusted Sagarika and arranged with her that she and Sagarika should meet the king in a particular grove after sunset disguised as Kanchanamala and Queen Vasavadatta. But as fate would have it, this conversation was overheard by one of the maid-servants of the queen, who duly reported the matter to her beloved mistress.

In the evening the king who was apprised by his friend of the arrangements made by him secretly left his apartments and made off to the grove where the meeting had been arranged for. Impatiently he waited and at last the appointed hour came. But no Sagarika turned up. So Vasantaka left the king alone and marched in search of her. At this time the king cursed himself for his

folly in running after another lady while he had his queen beautiful as the moon, doting on him, serving him as a slave and daily proving her worth as his friend and partner.

Not long after there came the queen and Kanchanamala to observe how the affair was progressing. The latter saw Vasantaka and beckoned him to her. He mistook her for Susangata whom he was expecting all the time, congratulated her on her most successful disguise as Kanchanamala and enquired after Sagarika. On her pointing to the woman by her side, he exclaimed that she really looked like the queen and asked her quickly to follow him, as the moon was threatening to pry into their secrets. To see how far their madness would carry them, the queen prayed to the moon to stay her course for a while, lest the traitors should learn earlier their error in mistaking her for Sagarika. She approached the bower and the king who was informed of her arrival by his friend came rushing to welcome her and begged her to cool his burning love by her

balmy embrace. Vasantaka also entreated her to gladden, by her gentle words, his friend whose ears had been recently bored through, as it were, by the harsh words of the queen. The moon rising far above the sky, the king remarked, "What need is there for the moon to show her face, now that you are here? Does not your face make the lotus close its bloom? Does it not cheer up the hearts of those who look at it? Does it not make lovers go mad? Well, if the moon has the heavenly nectar in her, you too have it in your lips." On hearing this speech the queen ironically remarked, "Surely, I am Sagarika, O King. Having fallen deeply in love with her, you take every woman you come across to be Sagarika." The King's face fell, and he did not know what to say. Vasantaka feared that his plot had been found out and that he would certainly be put to death. The king begged her to pardon him. The queen shed tears and with bowed head begged the king not to talk so. Vasantaka implored her to forgive, in her magnanimity, his friend's folly. The loving Hindu

wife in her said that, as she stood in the way of the king's enjoyment, she was the real criminal and that it was the king who should excuse her. Much moved at this speech he fell flat before her. She asked him to get up, but finding that he continued prostrate she walked away to avoid putting him to such humiliation. Not knowing that she was gone, he again repeated his prayer for pardon, when his friend admonished him not to cry in the wilderness, as the queen had gone. The king felt very sorry for not having secured the queen's pardon and both became anxious about the safety of Sagarika who, they feared, would be dealt with severely for her insolence.

Ere long there came Sagarika disguised as the queen. She said aloud to herself that as the queen had found out the plot and punished Susangata, the best course open to her was to hang herself. Hearing the soft musical voice of a woman, Vasantaka told the king that perhaps the queen being a noble-minded lady had returned. Presently they heard the words, " Oh, father, Oh mother, why

have you left me—unfortunate that I am—helpless?" Taking the voice to be that of Vasavadatta and fearing that she was probably about to commit suicide, they advanced rapidly in the direction of the voice.

The king saw a lady with her noose made of a creeper in her hand and taking her to be the queen begged of her not to hang herself but to throw it round his neck as he deserved much less to live. Sagarika, though anxious to part with her life in the beginning, now felt happy at the approach of her lover and longed to live for ever revelling in his sweet company. Yet mildly requesting him not to obstruct her in his fixed purpose, she begged of him not to fall a victim to the queen's wrath. Thereupon, knowing that she was Sagarika, the king tore off the noose from her hands and coming into a momentary contact with her fingers felt a sudden rush of joy coursing through him.

At that time, the queen was coming there accompanied by her attendant to soothe the king's wounded feelings. When at a distance they heard the king say, "Foolish lady, why

do you stand aloof and thwart my heart's desire?" Thinking that the speech was addressed to the queen, the maid asked her to go forward. The queen had no sooner finished saying that she would go unseen behind their backs and surprise the king by clinging to his neck they heard Vasantaka say, "Don't be nervous. Be amenable. Yield to his wish." The queen then recognised Sagarika standing beside the king and his friend. She told her maid that it was better to overhear the conversation unobserved. They heard Sagarika begging the king not to offend the queen by that display of excessive love for her, to which he replied that the queen was nothing when compared to her. This was more than what the queen could bear; and she exclaimed, "Well said, Oh king, your speech quite befits you!"

The king turned round and saw in his faithful wife a jealous fury and said submissively that he was not to blame and that he and his friend came there thinking that the lady whom they saw was her own self. He then fell down at her feet. She asked him to

rise and not to subject himself to such humiliation. Vasantaka showed her the noose and said that they were attracted by the voice of a lady in despair whom, on their arrival, they mistook for the queen owing to the close resemblance she bore to her majesty. This answer might account for their presence there; but would it heal the wound caused by her husband's passionate declaration to a scheming rival that she, his lawfully wedded wife, was nothing to him? She pointed this out to Vasantaka and seeing in him her husband's abettor had him bound with that very creeper. Then the queen left the place with her maid leading Vasantaka and Sagarika as prisoners. The former marched forward asking his friend to discover means for his release, while the latter cursed herself on her misfortune in not having been able to put an end to her life as she proposed.

They were taken to the palace and were imprisoned. On the way, Sagarika saw her friend Susangata and as she thought that her end was drawing near gave her the necklace to be presented to some worthy recipient.

Susangata often visited her in the cell and consoled her as best she could. One day Susangata missed her friend in the prison and the rumour reached her that Sagarika had been taken away somewhere perhaps to Ujjain, the birthplace of the queen.

Susangata was lamenting over the absence of Sagarika, when she happened to see Vasantaka who had been set free by the caprice of the queen. She offered the necklace to him. He reluctantly accepted it that he might console the king at least with the jewel worn by his love. He soon saw him and narrated to him all that he heard from Susangata about her friend.

Now was announced to the king the arrival of Vijayavarma who had come to inform him of the splendid success of his uncle Rumanvan, who had led an expedition against the king of Kosala. When he was introduced, he congratulated the king on the success gained by his minister for war and at the king's request he described in detail the exploits of the army and of its leader. He said, "At your Majesty's command a large army of

soldiers riding on elephants, cavalry and infantry was collected and made to attack the king of Kosala who was then stationed near the Vindhya mountains. Scarcely had the news of the march of our armies reached his ears, when he gathered at a short notice a huge army composed mostly of soldiers on elephants. A close fight ensued which resulted in the death of many of our men; but in the end our leader Rumanvan fought single-handedly and killed the king of Kosala. He has now placed my elder brother Jayavarman in charge of the country and is returning leisurely." The happy news of victory roused the king's drooping spirit and he sent word to his Chief Minister to reward the soldiers adequately.

Shortly after the arrival of Vijayavarman there came with a regiment of the king's troops Vasubhuti, the minister of Vikramabahu, and Babhravya. They told the chief minister how they set sail from Ceylon on an auspicious day with the daughter of the king Vikramabahu, how their ship was blown to pieces, how by the dispensation of a wise

and overruling Providence, they were miraculously saved and how they joined the army under the command of Rumanvan. The chief minister Yaugandharayana who had already heard the story of Sagarika was wise enough to conclude in his own mind that Sagarika was none but the princess of Ceylon. He was glad that the king and the princess had already fallen in love with each other and to fulfil his long cherished object he wanted to celebrate the marriage between them both as early as possible. But the queen had imprisoned the princess and he knew that it was no easy affair to persuade the queen to release her. However, his fertile brain whetted by the keen desire to see the marriage accomplished soon, hit on a cunning plan to secure the release of Sagarika.

He sent for a skilful magician and introduced him to the queen as having come from her father's capital. She naturally welcomed him with great cordiality and consented to witness with the king a performance of his. He asked her maid to take him to his majesty. After introduction, the magician said that by

his skill and with the blessings of his preceptor he could show the moon on earth, the mountain in air, fire on water, and sunset at midday. He begged of the king to choose the particular performance he desired to see. The king at once ordered the maid to convey his request to the queen to be present there with him on the occasion. Accordingly she arrived and soon afterwards the performance began. The magician showed them the heaven where they could see the creator Brahma seated on the lotus, Sankara with the crescent moon on his head and Vishnu the Destroyer of the Daityas with his bow, sword, mace and disc as well as the several gods and goddesses singing and dancing. Thereupon Vasantaka exclaimed that his show was nothing if he could not present Sagarika.

At that time, a servant announced the arrival of Vasubhuti whom, the chief minister desired, the king should see immediately. The queen was eager to meet the minister from her uncle's palace and so the magician was asked to stop his show for a while. As he left the hall he begged of their ma-

jesties to be gracious enough to witness at least one more show, to which they consented.

Vasubhuti entered accompanied by Babhravya. The former was so struck with the beauty of the palace and the music of the minstrels that he was beside himself with wonder, while the latter could not find words to express his thankfulness to God for their miraculous escape. When they entered the audience hall, they saw the necklace worn by Vasantaka, and asked each other whether it did not resemble the one worn by Ratnavali. Babhravya wanted to question Vasantaka about it, but the other stopped him saying that it was possible for a king to have a large store of such precious jewels. As they approached the throne, the king and the queen welcomed them and enquired after the health of all near and dear to Vikramabahu. Vasubhuti remained silent unwilling to communicate the sad news of the loss of Ratnavali, the king's daughter. The queen could not surmise the cause of his silence. Being very much pressed, the minister explained everything from the time of Babhravya's arrival at Ceylon

till the wrecking of the ship. The queen unable to suppress her sorrow cried, "Oh, Ratnavali, my dear cousin, whither hast thou gone? Why don't you reply me?" The king consoled her with the words that the ways of God are mysterious and that Ratnavali might have been saved as the minister and Babhravya had been.

The king asked Babhravya to explain in detail what had taken place as he could not clearly follow the minister's speech. When he began to speak, there was an uproar outside that the harem had caught fire. The king in his hurry cried out "Vasavadatta," "Vasavadatta," when the queen reminded him of her existence by her side, expressed with great feeling her anxiety about the safety of Sagarika, whom she had mercilessly imprisoned in the palace, and begged of him to rescue her. Immediately in spite of the advice of the minister Vasubhuti and others not to risk his life, the king rushed forward to save Sagarika. The queen too realised this danger to which her appeal had brought the king and proceeded to the

scene of fire, with Vasantaka, Vasubhuti and Babhravya.

The king saw Sagarika surrounded by the flames on all sides. She stood aloof and did not approach him, though her desire to die vanished the moment she saw the king. Lifting her up bodily he carried her in his arms and safely brought her outside. The queen was wonderstruck to find that the king had returned unhurt. Then it was evident to all that really there was no fire but it was merely the work of the magician.

When Vasubhuti saw Sagarika, he observed that she looked exactly like Ratnavali and asked the king who she was. The king said that the queen alone knew it. She answered that Sagarika was left in her charge by Yaugandharayana, who said that she was saved from the sea. On hearing this Vasubhuti concluded that she was his King's daughter and exclaimed, "Oh Ratnavali, what a sad plight you have been brought to!" Sagarika thereupon recognised the chief minister of her father's court and cried out,

"Oh Father, Oh mother, where are you? Please reply." The queen was startled to discover her cousin Ratnavali in the person of Sagarika and spoke soothingly to her. Vasubhuti then asked her to embrace the queen, her cousin. But she replied that she had sinned against her and dared not look her in the face, whereupon Vasavadatta assured her that she was only her affectionate cousin and requested the king to remove her chains which the king gladly did. Then the queen exclaimed that she had wronged her on account of the chief minister, who had kept everything concealed.

At this stage, Yaugandharayana came upon the scene. He tendered his apologies to the king and the queen and craved their pardon for having concealed his plans till then. He narrated to them the whole story beginning with the Astrologer's prophecy and concluded that, though the ways adopted to secure Ratnavali were somewhat objectionable, he was actuated only by the best of motives and by his loyalty to the throne. The king then asked him if the magician's latest

display of his skill was at his suggestion. The minister confessed that it was so.

The queen now showed herself as ready to celebrate the marriage of Ratnavali with the king as she had been to thwart the love intrigues of Sagarika. Craving her pardon in touching words for all the hardships to which she had subjected Ratnavali, the noble Vasavadatta herself bestowed the hand of her cousin on the king and begged of him to accord such a treatment to her as would make her forget her home, a needless request indeed, but one which showed how anxious she now was for the happiness of her much wronged cousin. The king promised to do so. Ratnavali bowed to the chief queen. The king felt happy that Vasavadatta had softened and that Sagarika had become his own. He sat on the throne like Vishnu with Goddess Lakshmi on one side and the Goddess of Earth on the other. Yaugandharayana, Vasubhuti, Babhravya, Vasantaka and Susangata, all forgot their trials and difficulties in the accomplishment of their purposes and exclaimed to one another, "All is well that ends well."

VISAKHADATTA

VISAKHADATTA or Visakhadeva, the author of *Mudrarakshasa,*a drama of political intrigue, was the son of Prithu and the grandson of Vateshwaradatta, both of whom, it is said, were the administrative heads of principalities, situated probably in the Himalayan districts. The father of the poet was honoured with the title of Maharajah. He is believed by some to have lived in the 7th or 8th century A. D. and to have been patronised by one king Avanti-Varman.

Unlike the other famous dramas where the soul of the play is always a 'love-affair', *Mudrarakshsa* is a historical production as facts are based on the life of a famous king Chandragupta. The whole central theme is politics which brings round about the relation of the king and his more famous minister Chanakya and the surrounding times. In the political aspect, no other Sanskrit drama can be compared with *Mudrarakshasa.*

MUDRARAKSHASA

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

CHANDRAGUPTA—King of Magadha. Also called the Maurya.

CHANAKYA—A Brahmin politician.

RAKSHASA—The Brahmin minister of the Nandas.

SARVARTHASIDDHI—The last of the Nanda kings.

PARVATESA—A hill-chief.

VAIROCHAKA—Parvatesa's brother.

MALAYAKETU—Son of Parvatesa.

BHAGURAYANA, NIPUNAKA, JIVASIDDHI, SIDDHARTHAKA — Agents of Chanakya

CHANDANADASA, SAKATADASA — Friends of Rakshasa

STHANAKALASA—A bard and agent of Rakshasa.

JIRNAVISHA—, KARABAKA— — Spies of Rakshasa.

MUDRARAKSHASA

ON either side of the sacred Ganges lay the mighty kingdom of Magadha famed for its wealth and learning. Its capital city was Pataliputra, otherwise known as Kusumapura or the city of flowers. At the time of our story, Sarvarthasiddhi of the House of Nandas was the monarch of the kingdom. By his queen Sunanda he had nine sons, while Mura, a low caste lady, who had bewitched him by her matchless beauty and sweet disposition bore him a boy, who afterwards became the father of the Maurya known in history as Chandragupta Maurya. The king was counselled by an expert body of Brahmin ministers deeply learned in all arts and sciences, and devoutly attached to him. Peace and prosperity reigned in his land and his exchequer was always full.

As time rolled on, the king felt himself too weak to continue to hold the reins of the government. So he left the administration of

his kingdom in the hands of the nine Nandas, and provided for his illegitimate son by installing him as the commander-in-chief of the royal forces. The Nandas became in course of time so jealous of the growing popularity and the strength of the Maurya that they contrived to shut him up stealthily with his sons in a subterranean cavern with intent to starve them to death.

Shortly after their imprisonment the king of Ceylon sent to the king of Magadha a cage with a model of a lion inside, enquiring if there was anyone in that country who could remove it without touching the iron bars of the cage. The Nandas who were then in a fix regretted their action in confining, within the bowels of the earth, the Mauryas who, they thought, could solve the riddle. So they hurried to the mouth of the cave and were immensely relieved to find Chandragupta still living, whom they entreated to help them in that extremity. He was the eldest son of their bastard brother. Tall of person and broad of chest, with high shoulders and hands reaching to his knees, his looks and mien bore the

indelible stamp of royalty. Sadly emaciated though he was then, he still retained wit enough to see through the trick of the cage. Applying a slow fire through a hole in the bottom plank of the cage, he melted down the model in the middle and showed himself superior to his uncles in ingenuity.

Their honour was retrieved, but the small-minded Nandas grew more than ever jealous of him. They could not, with any show of propriety, send him back to prison, but they appointed him as the Steward of the Royal Kitchen and bided their time to do away with him altogether.

The noble Maurya resented this insulting reward and cast about for allies to help him to avenge himself and his murdered father and brothers. Fate or his good luck one day threw across his path a Brahmin, whom he observed tearing up by the roots and burning up every particle of a tuft of grass upon which he chanced to stumble. The Maurya observed him with great interest. Such inveterate hatred and thoroughness in execution greatly appealed to him. There was the man best

fitted to help him. He therefore accosted the Brahmin, acquainted him with the full particulars of his history and enlisted his help for wreaking vengeance on the Nandas and gaining the throne of Magadha.

This young Brahmin was no other than Vishnugupta, otherwise known as Chanakya and Kautilya, the famous author of the classic work on Arthasastra, the Science of Polity. He was well versed in the four Vedas and in Astrology. He lived in a small cottage reciting and teaching the Vedas to his disciples, and in him were embodied the ancient Hindu ideals of plain living and high thinking.

One festival day Chanakya happened to go to the palace and he occupied one of the seats of honour reserved for learned Brahmins. King Sarvarthasiddhi regarded this as a presumptuous act and despite his ministers' request to desist from dishonouring a holy Brahmin of rare merit, grew so wroth as to pull him out of his seat. Thereupon Chanakya got wild with rage, and loosening his tuft of hair he vowed, as did Draupadi of old, in the presence of the Nandas and others assembled,

that he would not tie up his hair, till he destroyed the whole royal house. The Nandas in their arrogance, were, as ill-luck would have it, obdurate, while Chandragupta, suspecting the discovery of his understanding with Chanakya, escaped from the capital and joined him.

Chanakya was a man of deep thought and great foresight. He was a keen observer of men and things, and knew well the ways of the world. He had the quick wit to discover the motives of men and their actions. He now began to weave his plot to help Chandragupta who had sought his aid, and to extirpate the members of the royal family outright according to his vow.

He first sent to Pataliputra his friend and class-mate Indusarma, a sound scholar of Astrology, in the guise of a Jain ascetic, to gain the friendship of the ministers. Indusarma assumed the name of Jivasiddhi, and ere long became their favourite, especially of Rakshasa, the foremost of the group.

Chanakya then sought audience with Parvatesa, a powerful hill-chief and secured him as an ally of Chandragupta, promising

in return to give him one half of the Nanda kingdom. Thereupon with a large army composed of Sakas, Yavanas and Kambhojas they besieged the city of Kusumapura and offered battle to the Nandas. The fight was fierce and long, and the losses were heavy on both sides. In spite of Rakshasa's attempts to ward off the enemies' attacks with the help of the royal standing army comprising of archers, infantry, cavalry, chariot and elephant corps, the nine Nandas were killed in the course of the fight. King Sarvarthasiddhi, unable to endure the bereavement and unwilling to prolong the sufferings of the citizens, escaped through an underground passage. Owing to the king's absence, the soldiers lost heart and scattered in different directions. The kingdom then passed into the hands of the enemies.

Well might Chanakya have congratulated himself on this success, but he thought his work incomplete until the Maurya was firmly established on the throne of the Nandas.

Rakshasa, the chief minister of the Nandas was no mercenary. He identified himself

with the cause of his masters. So, even after the city had fallen into the hands of the Maurya, he strove to kill him and avenge his master's defeat. With the help of Jivasiddhi he managed to send a poison maid towards Chandragupta. But Chanakya who was probably apprised of this by his friend Jivasiddhi himself succeded in diverting the poison maid towards Parvatesa to whom half the kingdom was due. The hill-chief died and Chanakya set the rumour afloat that Rakshasa, intending to weaken the Maurya's side had brought about the death of Parvatesa, his powerful ally and friend.

Meanwhile Bhagurayana, one of Chanakya's agents, informed Malayaketu, the son of Parvatesa, that his father had been brutally put to death by means of a poison maid by that cut-throat of a Brahmin, the treacherous Chanakya. On hearing this, Malayaketu fled from the camp lest he too should fall a victim to Chanakya's guile. Thereupon Chanakya had it proclaimed in the city that consequent upon Parvatesa's death and Malayaketu's unexpected departure from the camp, Parvatesa's

brother Vairochaka had been promised the share of territory due to his brother. This had, as expected, the certain effect of allaying the suspicions of the people that Chanakya might have killed Parvatesa to avoid giving him his share of the kingdom.

Finding that his effort to slay Chandragupta by the poison maid had miscarried, Rakshasa took into his confidence Daruvarma, the chief of the architects, and Abhayadatta, the royal physician, besides the Chamberlain. He solicited their help to bring about the Maurya's death and gave them large sums of money so that they might not miss any chance of killing Chandragupta.

At this juncture Chanakya announced to the people in Kusumapura that the king would make his public entry into the palace of the Nandas on a particular night at the propitious moment fixed by the astrologers. He sent for the architects and ordered them to put up ornamental welcome arches at the several entrances to the palace on the eastern side. Daruvarma, as fate would have it, blurted out that, anticipating his orders, he

had already erected a golden arch at the outermost eastern gate. Though Chanakya suspected some foul play in this unauthorised act of Daruvarma, yet he commended his forethought and devotion to the Maurya and promised him an adequate reward.

Chanakya installed both Chandragupta and Vairochaka on the throne and crowned them kings of their respective territories. He arranged for the triumphal entry of Chandragupta into Kusumapura. The citizens, in thousands, were eagerly waiting to see their new king. Apprehending from Daruvarma's unwarranted act some danger to the person of the king, Chanakya prevailed upon Vairochaka to enter the palace first. He was dressed in robes embroidered with bright pearls and gems of variegated colours. A diadem set with precious stones and bedecked with jewels encircled his brow. His whole form was so hid in the numerous garlands of fragrant flowers that even his intimate friends could not recognize him. Every one easily mistook him for Chandragupta. He mounted the state elephant and proceeded to the

palace with all the royal paraphernalia. When the procession approached the first arch, Varvaraka, the driver of the state elephant and an accomplice of Daruvarma unsheathed his sword to cut off the king's head in case Daruvarma's attempt failed. Frightened at this act of his, the elephant rushed forward and Daruvarma let loose the arch a second too soon. It fell upon poor Varvaraka who died that very instant. Daruvarma fearing that his plot was discovered put the king to death with the iron rod in his hand. This provoked the foot soldiers, who stoned Daruvarma to death. Thus Daruvarma's plot to kill Chandragupta proved only as a service to the Maurya who was rid of his partner without any blame attaching to him.

Chandragupta then safely entered the palace and from that time Chanakya kept a watchful eye over the officers and the servants, and guarded the king's person with great care. On one occasion the state physician Abhayadatta, under the influence of Rakshasa, gave a cup of medicine to the king. Chanakya who was with the Maurya suspected the admixture of

some poison and forced the physician himself to drink it. He swallowed it and died on the spot. On another occasion, the life of luxury and extravagance led by the Chamberlain who had received large sums of money from Rakshasa excited the suspicion of Chanakya. When an explanation was demanded of him for this sudden accession of wealth, his answers were so halting and unsatisfactory that Chanakya, confirmed in his suspicion that he had dealings with the king's enemies, ordered the summary execution of the traitor. Two attempts of Rakshasa's adherents had thus failed. This only served to increase the vigilance of Chanakya. The Chamberlain's treachery made the astute minister expect a third attempt on the life of the king while asleep. So he took over himself the task of daily examining the King's bedroom. His anticipations soon proved tiue. For, one day, he found a line of ants emerging from a hole in the wall with particles of fresh food in their mouths, and it struck his fertile brain at once that some men might lie concealed in the wall. With Chanakya, to think was to act, and

the chamber was ordered to be set on fire. The ruffians lying in ambush in the underground chamber perished in the flames. Thus was Rakshasa foiled in all his attempts.

In the meantime Rakshasa had departed from Pataliputra, leaving his wife and a son five years old under the charge of his trusty friend and jeweller Chandanadasa, and sought the company of Malayaketu. He proposed to enthrone him as the sole ruler of Magadha, if he would open hostilities with the Maurya. He recked little of personal safety. Vengeance was his sole aim, which, he conceived, would please the spirits of his departed masters. Malayaketu for his part was delighted with the valuable assistance thus offered. Preparations for a war with the Maurya were pushed on. His allies were summoned and a large army was gathered in a short time.

To return to Chanakya. He was a true Brahmin. Though he had the Maurya under his influence, he did not like to enjoy the fruits of his labours. He had no desire to act as the minister to the king even for a

moment longer than was necessary. Ministership had no great attraction for him. He loved more his work of reciting Vedas and teaching them to his pupils. But before resuming his legitimate work, he wanted to place the kingdom on a stable basis. He rightly thought that Maurya could not sit on the throne free from cares so long as Rakshasa was away. So his only aim was to make Rakshasa the prime minister of the Maurya. Besides he had the greatest admiration for his culture, skill and bravery in war and, above all, for his loyalty to his master. Hence Chanakya set about this Herculean task of making Rakshasa the chief minister in the accomplishment of which he thought that, for the sake of his beloved Chandragupta, no duplicity, forgery, falsehood or even murder which he might be obliged to have recourse to, was incompatible with his birth.

He knew that Rakshasa could not be won over so long as any scion of the Nanda stock was alive. Therefore Chanakya deliberately caused Sarvarthasiddhi to be killed, though he had repaired to the forest for doing penance.

He next sent out in different directions several spies conversant with many languages, modes of dealing with strangers and the art of disguise. He dealt with them so deftly that they did not know one another, though they were engaged in the same task and by the same individual.

One of the spies named Nipunaka went about the city of Pataliputra in the garb of a beggar with a picture of the suffering mortals in the regions of the God of Death. In the course of his rounds he ascertained the names of those attached to Rakshasa. One day he went to the house of Chandanadasa, the chief of the jewellers. He spread the canvas containing the picture and began his songs. Presently a young boy of a beautiful complexion and beaming intelligence came out attracted by the music. Immediately a cry arose from within the house, "Oh! he has gone out", and was repeated twice or thrice. A woman darted out and hastily retreated with the boy. Just then a signet ring which was probably too big for her fingers dropped down, rebounded and fell

at the beggar's feet. A glance at it showed him the name of Rakshasa engraved on it. He treasured it up in his wallet unperceived by the inmates. He wended his way to the house of the minister and disclosed to him the secrets fished out by him. He mentioned the names of those greatly attached to Rakshasa, Jivasiddhi the Jain ascetic, Sakatadasa the scribe, and Chandanadasa the jeweller. Then he handed over the ring and set forth, in detail, the circumstances under which he came across it. Chanakya applauded his services and promised him a suitable reward.

At this moment there arrived a messenger of the king to ascertain the minister's views about the distribution of the valuable ornaments worn by their deceased ally Parvatesa. Chanakya sent word in reply that he was happy in the idea having struck them both simultaneously and that the ornaments, being costly ones, should be presented to Brahmins of rare merit, who would be chosen by him and sent to the king.

Having now obtained the signet ring of Rakshasa, Chanakya thought that Rakshasa

himself had come into the hands. He sent for his agent Siddharthaka whom he had already asked to seek the friendship of Sakatadasa, placed in his hands a letter and enjoined him to get it neatly written by his friend without making any mention of his name. When he returned with the letter, Chanakya ordered him to seal it with Rakshasa's signet. He then dismissed him with some secret instructions.

Chanakya, at this stage, circulated in the city the news that Jivasiddhi, the Jain ascetic, would be ignominiously expelled from Kusumapura for his friendship with Rakshasa and for having killed Parvatesa at his instigation. Subsequently he ordered the execution of Sakatadasa for fomenting hatred against the king. By these acts he hoped to strike terror into the minds of the adherents of the late king.

Meanwhile summons was issued to Chandanadasa. When he presented himself before the minister, he made a few preliminary enquiries regarding his business, and asked him if it was true that he harboured the

family of Rakshasa. He denied it. Just then they heard a confused noise which, they learnt, was caused by the banishment of Jivasiddhi. Chanakya pointed out how severe the king was with the malcontents. This had no effect on him. Shortly after they heard another uproar. Chanakya's pupil who was sent to ascertain its cause told them that Sakatadasa was being led to the gallows. Chanakya now asked him to take his advice and deliver up Rakshasa's wife and son lest he too should incur the king's displeasure. Chandanadasa was provoked. "Why do you frighten me thus"? said he, "Even if my friend's wife and son were with me, I would not hand them over to you. What more should I say in their absence from my house"? In his unbounded anger Chanakya asked him if he was prepared to pay the penalty for his crime, and he agreed. Then Chanakya ordered the imprisonment of Chandanadasa with his wife and children.

Shortly afterwards Chanakya learnt from his pupil that Siddharthaka had carried away Sakatadasa from the place of execution after

scaring the hangmen. He was gratified at heart to observe that his instructions were being faithfully carried out by his agent; yet he ordered the death of the executioners for their negligence.

While matters were going on in this fashion at Kusumapura, Malayaketu's chamberlain one day visited Rakshasa, gave him a necklace and implored him, in the name of the prince, to wear the same at least for his sake; for, since the death of the Nandas Rakshasa had cast off all decorations and remained bare-necked. The minister readily accepted it and put it on to please the prince. A few minutes later one of his spies, Jirnavisha by name, approached him and informed him of the failure of all his plans to kill the Maurya, of the banishment of the Jain ascetic, of the execution of his adherent Sakatadasa and of the imprisonment of his friend Chandanadasa with his wife and children. Before Rakshasa recovered from the shock, Sakatadasa entered upon the scene accompanied by Siddharthaka. He described to his chief how he was saved from the jaws of death by his friend

standing near by. When Rakshasa became acquainted with the details of his escape, he felt so grateful to Siddharthaka that he readily offered him the necklace he wore as a reward. Siddharthaka gladly accepted it in accordance with the instructions of his master and thanked him for his munificence. He requested him to keep it in his custody, as he was new to the place and had no friend to whom he could entrust it. The minister granting his request, he packed it and affixed on it the seal of Rakshasa which he had brought with him. On receipt of the parcel Sakatadasa happened to see the seal and found it, to his wonder, to be that of Rakshasa who, on being shown the same, was taken by surprise. When questioned, Siddharthaka cunningly told them that he found the ring in front of the house of Chandanadasa at Pataliputra. The credulous minister believed his statement, and admitted that such a thing was quite possible. At Sakatadasa's request, Siddharthaka gave the ring to the minister, who passed it on to Sakatadasa to be used by him for all official purposes. Next he prayed to be taken into

Rakshasa's service as there could be no admission into Kusumapura for one who had wronged Chanakya. Rakshasa was but too glad to oblige the saviour of his friend and granted him his request.

When Sakatadasa and his friend left the minister's presence, the spy revealed to him that a conflict had risen between the Maurya and Chanakya after the departure of Malayaketu. Chanakya had prohibited the celebration of the Kaumudi festival ordained by the king, and this arrogant act offended him deeply. On hearing this Rakshasa ordered the spy to go back to Pataliputra and ask, in his name, Sthanakalasa, his friend, who was disguised as a bard to exasperate the wounded feelings of the Maurya, when occasion permitted it and to communicate his progress in that direction secretly through Karabaka, his spy. Accordingly the man took leave of the minister and repaired to the capital city of Magadha.

At this juncture some merchants came to Rakshasa's house. They were the spies of Chanakya in disguise. They brought for sale some necklaces given to them by Chanakya

who got them in his turn, from the holy Brahmins, his own adherents, sent to receive gifts from the Maurya. They were formerly worn by Parvatesa, and were now offered for a third of their value. Rakshasa thought it a dead bargain and bought them at once.

To further his object to win over Rakshasa to his side, Chanakya resolved to create discord between him and Malayaketu with the help of his own emissaries Bhagurayana, Badrapata, Siddharthaka and others who had joined the enemy's camp as malcontents under one pretext or other. So he advised Chandragupta to pick up a sham quarrel with him and to make a show of ruling the kingdom independently of him, which the Maurya reluctantly agreed to do. Accordingly king Chandragupta sent for his minister Chanakya one day and on his arrival received him with due respect as usual. He expressed a desire to know his object in having countermanded his order regarding the Kaumudi festival. Chanakya replied that, since the Maurya was wholly dependent upon his minister for the entire administration of the state, he had no

business to enquire into the reasons for the particular step he had taken in connection with the festival. At this the king flushed with anger and the timely song of Sthanakalasa that, " A king is a king not because he wears ornaments, but because his order is not slighted by others" exasperated him still more. Chanakya easily understood that the officious bard was an agent of Rakshasa. But pleased with the verses, the king ordered a hundred thousand gold coins to be given to him. Chanakya protested against his orders. Chandragupta grew hot at being brow-beaten and exclaimed, " Kingship is bondage to me since I am checked at every stage." " Such is the lot," said Chanakya, " of kings who depend entirely on their ministers. If you do not like to be checked, you may take up the reins of the government in your own hands." Agreeing to do so, he asked Chanakya to explain why he forbade the festival. " My first object," said Chanakya, " is just to show that you are a king graced by humility, since you allow your own orders which are obeyed by hundreds of kings to be set

at naught by me. Secondly this is a time, I think, when our forces should be consolidated and kept ready against any invasion. I understand that Malayaketu is planning an attack upon us at the instance of Rakshasa, Bhagurayana, Badrapata and the other malcontents who have joined his camp. This is not the time therefore for merry making." Quick came the next question, "Why then did you allow Malayaketu to escape?". Chanakya replied, "We could have dealt with him in one of two ways only. We might have killed him or given him half the kingdom due to his father according to our agreement with him. In the former case our action would only confirm the suspicion of the people that we caused Parvatesa's death, which is not to our interest. In the latter case our action in killing Parvatesa would become fruitless. Hence I allowed him to escape." The king next said, "Why did you fail to take proper measures against Rakshasa while he was living in the city?" Chanakya coolly replied, "Rakshasa is rich and popular among the citizens. Had he been allowed

to remain in the city, he would have created a revolution. But any disaffection that he may spread from abroad can be subdued by our vigilant efforts." "In that case why did you not capture him by force?" "He is Rakshasa, remember. If violence were used, he would have put the flower of our army to death. If that was impossible, he would have killed himself—a serious loss in any case." "You are good at arguing no doubt. But I cannot help thinking that after all Rakshasa is more praiseworthy." "How"? roared Chanakya. "What has he done to merit this praise at your hands?" "A brave soul he is," said the king. "He durst live in the city as long as he liked, even after it came into our hands." "Ho! Ho! Ho!" exclaimed Chanakya, "I thought that you would say that Rakshasa enthroned Malaya-ketu after having dethroned the Maurya just as I did with you and the Nandas." "Why do you take credit for the defeat of the Nandas?" interrogated the king. "By whom else were the well-known lords of ninety nine crores destroyed?" "By fate, the irresis-

table enemy of the Nanda race." "Only the illiterate believe in fate." "The literate should not swagger." "What! Do you bandy words with me? Dare you lord it over me as if I were an ordinary servant? If you prefer Rakshasa to me, by all means, give him this sword." With these words he threw down the badge of his office, stamped the ground with his foot, and in great rage left the king's presence. The king was terribly alarmed at this. Summoning up his courage he ordered his messengers to announce that henceforth king Chandragupta would rule independently of Chanakya, the mention of whose name without the usual epithet of respect appended to it astounded the servants and convinced them of the sincerity of his new move.

Karabaka, Rakshasa's spy, ran to Malayaketu's camp to carry the news of Sthanakalasa's success in having widened the breach between the king and Chanakya. He was admitted to the minister's presence. Before he began to deliver his message, there arrived in the antechamber Prince Malayaketu and his private secretary, Bhagurayana.

Malayaketu came to pay a surprise visit to Rakshasa to enquire after his health, as he often complained of headache owing to multiplicity of state affairs. On the way he asked Bhagurayana what Badrapata and others meant by saying that they sought his service not by the recommendation of Rakshasa but through his general Sikharaka. Bhagurayana replied, "Their meaning is clear enough. Those who wish to rise high in the estimation of their master should seek him through one who is beloved and friendly and who will continue to be so. It is true that Rakshasa is your dear and trusty friend. But he is ill-disposed not towards Chandragupta but towards Chanakya. The former is after all a shoot of the Nanda stem, for which Rakshasa's love is immeasurable. If, for any reason, a quarrel should arise between the two, leading to the dismissal of Chanakya, it is doubtful whether Rakshasa would not form an alliance with the Maurya. Besides the king himself might implore him to become his minister, as he had been holding the office during the time of his ancestors. Should that come to pass, those introduced by

Rakshasa might justifiably be mistrusted, if not actually suspected of infidelity." When Bhagurayana just finished his speech, they both arrived at the minister's palace. They heard Rakshasa say, "Did you see Sthanakalasa at Kusumapura ?" Malayaketu who listened to this proposed to Bhagurayana that they should overhear what exactly was being talked of by Rakshasa and others about Kusumapura.

Rakshasa's spy was reporting thus :—" Sir, you may remember that you ordered me to go to Kusumapura and instruct Sthanakalasa to praise Chandragupta and rouse up his anger when Chanakya committed any act of disobedience. Accordingly I went there and delivered your message. Meanwhile the king, it appears, had ordered celebration of the Kaumudi festival to the immense delight of the people. But Chanakya forbade the same, contrary to the king's wishes. The king grew angry and Sthanakalasa added fuel to the fire by singing verses calculated to exasperate him."

RAKSHASA : Well done ! Sthanakalasa, well done. You have sown the seed of discord in time and

it will soon bear the desired fruit. Chandragupta who transcends all men in lustre cannot rightly brook any such transgression. Well, what next ?

KARABAKA: Sir, infuriated by this act of disobedience the king has dismissed Chanakya from service.

RAKSHASA: Is the prohibition of the festival the only cause for this bold step of the king ?

KARABAKA: The king is angry that he connived at the escape of Malyaketu and your honoured self.

RAKSHASA: Friend Sakatadasa, Chandragupta has come into my power. Chandanadasa can be set free and you too can presently join your wife and children. Karabaka, where is Chanakya, now that he is dismissed ?

KARABAKA: He lives in Pataliputra.

RAKSHASA: What! Does he still stay there? Has he not gone to a forest to do penance? Sakatadasa, I could not have expected this of Chanakya, who flew into a rage at the slight offered by the Nandas. Now is it not strange that he has put up with this great insult hurled at him by the Maurya, who owes his all to him and him alone?

SAKATADASA: Perhaps, experience has taught him how difficult it is to make a vow and keep it.

RAKSHASA: Quite possible. Sakatadasa, you had better look to Karabaka's wants.

Malayaketu and Bhagurayana who closely followed the conversation now stepped forward. The prince asked Rakshasa how long they should remain idle with the gathered forces. Rakshasa replied that they might

start at once, for it was the most opportune moment for them to attack the helpless Maurya who had dismissed Chanakya. The prince gave orders for an immediate march of the army and returned to the camp with Bhagurayana. But he was none too easy in his mind; he had begun to doubt Rakshasa's sincerity. Bhagurayana was strengthening it by plausible insinuations and open remarks.

Rakshasa, however, did not suspect this change in the attitude of Malayaketu. He sent for an astrologer to fix a time for the army's march. Jivasiddhi turned up. The sight of an ascetic was considered an ill-omen and the time fixed by him was regarded by Rakshasa inauspicious. He asked the ascetic to consult other astrologers upon which he left the place in high dudgeon asking Rakshasa himself to do it.

Soon the army began to march and came within a short distance of Pataliputra. Owing to the proximity of the capital the ingress to, and the egress from, the camp were controlled by permits. Jivasiddhi appeared before Bhagurayana the officer-in-charge of the issue

of permits and applied for a pass. He asked the ascetic if he was going out on behalf of the minister. This was enough to put him out. With great vehemence he cried out that he had nothing to do with Rakshasa or the devil. Bhagurayana plied him with questions, when the ascetic, feigning to reveal the secret under the force of compulsion, gave out that he regretted having made friends with Rakshasa. Rakshasa had killed Parvatesa by means of the poison maid, and he was paying the penalty by being banished from the city of Pataliputra. Bhagurayana inquired of him if it was not Chanakya who killed Parvatesa. Jivasiddhi replied that Chanakya had nothing to do with the poison maid at all. Rakshasa, not satisfied with that, was even then planning something which, he feared, might cost him his life. Malayaketu who just then arrived at the place over-heard all that passed between them. Not knowing it Bhagurayana asked Jivasiddhi to repeat for the King's sake what he had said. The King observed that he, to his great grief, had already listened to the same. Jivasiddhi's task was over. He had faithfully carried out

the behests of Chanakya, and had developed the discord between Malayaketu and Rakshasa. Poor Rakshasa to repose confidence in such men as were ready to sell even their conscience for gold!

But Bhagurayana had been instructed by his chief Chanakya, to look to the safety of Rakshasa's life at all times. At this instant he feared that Malayaketu, in a fit of temper, might do away with Rakshasa, his father's alleged assassin. So he told him that the minister might not be so much to blame, as political considerations and not personal animosities might have prevailed with him at the moment. He therefore implored him to keep him on, till Magadha was gained, after which he might deal with him as he thought fit. Malayaketu acquiesced in this. At this stage their conservation was cut short by the advent of the Superintendent of the outposts.

Siddharthaka was found going out without a passport and was arrested accordingly. He was taken to the presence of the King with a parcel in his hand, which bore Rakshasa's seal. When he was questioned, he deliberately lied

that he was sent by Rakshasa on an urgent business. He refused to disclose it. Hardly was he given a few boxes on the ears, when down dropped a letter. It was the self-same one dictated by Chanakya and written neatly by Sakatadasa at the request of Siddharthtaka. He had brought it safely to Rakshasa's camp, when he carried Sakatadasa from the place of execution. Malayaketu noticed the seal. It was found to be Rakshasa's. The letter was torn open. The handwriting was observed to resemble Sakatadasa's very closely. It did not contain either the place or the date of writing; nor did it contain either the name of the writer or that of the addressee. It ran thus:—

"With due respect some one from some place writes to an important person in the proper place. We are glad that the truthful one has kept his word by dismissing our adversary. He has only to gain the goodwill of our friends here whose alliance we have already secured, by giving them the promised reward. On receipt of that they will kill their present master and go over to their benefactor. Though the truthful one may remember this,

yet we have taken the liberty of reminding him of it. Some of them wish* to get the treasure and the elephants of the enemy, and the rest long to share his territory. We are in due receipt of the three ornaments sent by the truthful one. We request the truthful one to accept the present sent herewith and learn the rest from the bearer."

Siddharthaka denied any knowledge of the contents of the letter. At this stage the parcel taken from his person was examined. The seal was Rakshasa's. When it was opened, it was found to contain the very necklace presented by Malayaketu to Rakshasa. It was certain that the letter was intended for Chandragupta. On being asked to deliver the message, he agreed to do it in secret to the king, if he was promised his life. It was readily done. He then gave out what he alleged to have been the message sent by Rakshasa: "Chitravarma of the Kuluta country, Simhanada of Malaya, Pushkaraksha of Kashmir, Sushena of Sindh, and Meghanada of Persia are the five princes who are deeply attached to your majesty. The first three are

eager to share the territory of Malayaketu and the last two desire to take his elephants and treasure. Just as your majesty was pleased to favour me by dismissing Chanakya, so your majesty should oblige them by granting them what they covet."

Malayaketu became thunderstruck and he could then account for the excessive devotion of the princes to Rakshasa which had been inexplicable to him till that moment. His mind was completely set against Rakshasa. Yet he wished to give him a chance to defend himself, if possible. So he sent for Rakshasa.

When the messenger arrived to take him, Rakshasa was giving directions as to how the army should march. Unwilling to go bare-necked, he put on one of the jewels brought by Sakatadasa and appeared before Malayaketu. He said that he was busy arranging the soldiers in military array and described the same to the prince. When the latter heard that the five princes mentioned in the letter had been

assigned the proud duty of guarding him in the rear, he was astounded. What else could poor Rakshasa have spoken? He was absolutely ignorant of the letter, the parcel and the verbal message, and had spoken the bare truth.

Malayaketu referred to the letter and its contents, which startled Rakshasa. He pleaded in vain that he did not entrust any business to Siddharthaka and that he wrote no letter to any one. He turned to Siddharthaka and was surprised to hear him say that being beaten he could not keep the secret. The letter was placed in his hands and after perusing it he asserted that it was all the work of the enemy. The prince showed him the ornament sent along with the letter. The parcel bore his seal and the jewel was the necklace presented to him by Malayaketu. Rakshasa said that he gave it to Siddharthaka as a reward for his having saved his friend Sakatadasa. To avoid the chance of Rakshasa's statements making any impression in the prince's mind favourable to the minister, Bhagurayana said, "I wonder if such a costly

necklace given by the prince would be presented to a man like Siddharthaka."

The question of the writer was then taken up. Siddharhaka averred that it was written by Sakatadasa. It was a critical moment. If Sakatadasa was shown the letter and asked who wrote it, the truth would have come to light and the entire plot of Chanakya would have failed miserably; for he could state with certainty that it was the fair copy written by him of a letter brought by Siddharthaka, before the order of execution was passed against him. To avert this crisis Bhagurayana said, " Sakatadasa may not like to admit the truth in Rakshasa's presence. So it is better to get a specimen of his writing and compare it with the writing in the letter." This suggestion was approved of by Malayaketu. Through ill-luck Rakshasa did not insist on a personal cross-examination of Sakatadasa. The writings were alike, and it was settled that Sakatadasa had written it. Rakshasa began to doubt if he too had turned a traitor to him to save his wife and children. Rakshasa, though a man of mighty intellect and valour, still had

this defect in him of as easily suspecting people as of trusting them, which, in the end worked out his own ruin.

Malayaketu next drew his attention to the acknowledgement of the receipt of the three jewels sent to him and questioned him if the one that he was wearing was not one of them. It was worn by his father Parvtesa the veracity of which statement was testified to by his attendant. Rakshasa pleaded that he purchased it and two others from a merchant; but this reply did not carry the least weight with the prince. How Parvatesa's ornaments could come up for sale in the streets was beyond his comprehension. He asked him if he had fixed these jewels as the price for his own life. Rakshasa became aware that he had been securely caught in the net laid out by Chanakya. He said to himself. "Since the writing and the seal are genuine, I can't say that the letter is not mine. If I state that Sakatadasa has turned traitor through fear, who will believe it especially when we are moving very intimately even now? Again who will believe

that the Maurya sent the ornaments for public sale? No course is open to me but to admit everything."

While he was musing in this manner, the prince asked him why he preferred serving Chandragupta to lording it over himself. Rakshasa replied, "You are not to blame for putting this question. It is all the work of Fate." Malayaketu grew wild and cried out, "You call it the work of fate and not of your greed. Not satisfied with having killed by means of the poison maid my revered father who trusted you, you have now resumed your work of destruction by trying to sell me off to the enemy like meat in order to succeed Chanakya as the minister of the Maurya? Beware, I am more than a match for you and the Maurya put together." This was too much for Rakshasa to bear. He exclaimed, "I never set the poison maid against Parvatesa." "Who killed my father then?" came the quick demand. "Ask Destiny", said Rakshasa, "Destiny! Not Jivasiddhi?" retorted the prince. The bare mention of Jivasiddhi's name brought the fact home to Rakshasa's unsuspecting mind

that the ascetic too was a spy of Chanakya. He felt, to his deep mortification, that the enemies had hold of him at every quarter. The prince raged and fumed. This deliberate and treacherous deceit, as he thought it, played by Rakshasa irritated him beyond measure. He gave orders to his general to murder Chitravarma, Simhanada and Pushkaraksha in cold blood for the alleged crime of having coveted his territories, and to trample under elephants, Sushena and Meghanada who were said to seek them as their share. He then turned to Rakshasa and said, "I am not Rakshasa. I am no treacherous murderer. I am Malayaketu. Go and serve Chandragupta." With these words he walked away with Bhagurayana.

When the allied kings learnt how Malayaketu had brutally murdered Chitravarma and others, they set out for their respective territories, whereupon Malayaketu was seized and made prisoner by Bhagurayana and the other agents of Chanakya.

Rakshasa was now left alone to curse himself for having associated with, and confided

in, the very adherents of Chanakya without testing them sufficiently. He became dejected and in a fit of depression thought of his future course. He was unfit to do penance, while the spirit of revenge was raging within. So long as his enemy was alive, he did not like to commit suicide. Above all, his gratitude to Chandanadasa for not surrendering his wife and son would not allow him to proceed anywhere, till he set him free from the prison. He therefore directed his steps to Pataliputra, his movements being closely watched by a spy of Chanakya.

Rakshasa came armed with a sword to a grove lying on the outskirts of the city and regretted the want of judgment displayed by the prince whose vision was dimmed by Destiny which made him suspect that Rakshasa would go over to the side of his adversary for worldly gain. Indulging in similar sad thoughts he sat on a stone. At this instant there came to that spot an agent of Chanakya with a noose round his neck as if he was about to kill himself. Pretending to be unaware of Rakshasa's presence, he stood in

front of him and prepared to commit the unholy act. Rakshasa pressed him to acquaint him with the cause of his distress. After repeated entreaties he said, "Chandanadasa, the chief of the jewellers, has been imprisoned with his wife and children by Chandragupta for refusing to deliver up to him the wife and son of his friend Rakshasa, the minister of the Nandas. My friend Vishnudasa approached the king and offered all his property amounting to several crores as ransom for Chandanadasa's liberation. But the king sternly refused and ordered his execution. Unable to bear the sorrow Vishnudasa has resolved to mount the pyre before the news of Chandanadasa's death reaches him. For my part I wish to strangle myself to death before my friend dies." Rakshasa was touched by the constancy of these friends and saw how despicable he was in contrast with those men who were ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their friends. His case was worse, for Chandanadasa was going to lose his life for his sake and yet he remained inactive

Soon he begged of the man to ask Vishnudasa not to enter fire and offered to rescue Chandanadasa with that very weapon in his hand. The spy inquired if he was the famous minister Rakshasa, who was said to be unrivalled in wielding the sword. On his saying that he was the self-same person, the spy informed him that he would make matters worse if he approached the place of execution with his sword. From the time of Sakatadasa's escape for which the hangmen were put to death, the executioners were very cautious and would execute the criminal earlier, if they saw any one approach them with a sword. Immediately Rakshasa cast away his sword, and the spy having successfully executed Chanakya's orders repaired to meet his friend Vishnudasa.

Finding no other alternative, Rakshasa resolved to offer his life as ransom for his friend. He hurried to the place of execution. Chandanadasa in criminal's dress was being led by two hangmen, his wife and son following him with tears rolling down their cheeks in torrents. Chandanadasa hugged the boy to his

bosom and gave him his parting advice, "Never fail to oblige a friend even at the peril of your life." "Need I be taught this, father?" said the boy, "Is it not our family rule?" At this juncture Rakshasa rushed to the spot imploring the hangmen to wait. He asked one of them to inform Chanakya of his arrival. One of the hangmen told Chanakya that the minister Rakshasa was after all in their hands. Immediately he came forth, and prostrating before Rakshasa said, "I, Vishnugupta, bow to you." When he was about to touch his feet, Rakshasa asked him not to do so, as his body had been polluted by the touch of the executioners. Chanakya said that they were not really hangmen, but Siddharthka and his friends in disguise. He then described to him at great length his plot beginning with the departure of Malayaketu from their camp at the instigation of Bhagurayana and ending with the part played by the spy in the grove. He confessed that all those attempts were only to effect a reconciliation between him and Chandragupta. Rakshasa was convinced of Sakatadasa's innocence.

Now the king came with his attendants and saluted Chanakya, who complimented him on the accomplishment of all his desires. On being introduced to Rakshasa Chandragupta saluted him. Rakshasa blessed the Maurya. The king said, "I lack nothing when you both as gurus, are wide awake in the furtherance of my cause." Rakshasa was stunned at the magnanimity displayed by Chanakya and Chandragupta.

Chanakya inquired if he wished that Chandanadasa should live. When Rakshasa replied that there could be no doubt about it, Chanakya asked him to accept the ministership, if he wished to save his life. Rakshasa was diffident to assume an office so ably filled by Chanakya. But he was told that he should accept the office, or Chandanadasa should face the agonies of death. Rakshasa finding no other way to save his friend accepted the offer. Thereupon Chanakya congratulated the Maurya on his peculiar good fortune in having got Rakshasa for his minister.

At this instant a messenger informed them that Malayaketu had been brought in

chains by Bhagurayana and others, and that they awaited orders as to his disposal. Chanakya commanded him to communicate the message to minister Rakshasa, who said that his life might be spared in consideration of his having lived with him for some time. The king turned to Chanakya, who told him that the first request of the minister must be granted. Chanakya ordered the man to tell Bhagurayna that the king at the request of his minister Rakshasa had granted Malayaketu his life and his paternal kingdom, and that they should take him with due honours to his city and return after placing him on the throne. He then sent orders to the Superintendent of the fort to release Chandanadasa and his family and to appoint him as the head of the merchant guild. The two friends Rakshasa and Chandanadasa met each other after great trials and their separation seemed only to enhance their mutual friendship.

The king, in the fulness of his heart, thanked Chanakya for all his exertions on his behalf, and Chanakya having fulfilled his twofold vow returned back to his pupils and the Vedas.

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